

Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Friday, 27th January 2023 at 10.00 a.m. at The Green Tree Inn and via Microsoft Teams.

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| * Mr M. Brooke | Mr C. Crowe |
| * V Mr P.A.M. Cornish | * Mr L. Garrett |
| * Mr I. Dixon | Mr J. Hoare |
| Mr R. Durdy | * Mr P. Horne (Vice-Chairman) |
| * Mr R. Hopkins | Mr M. Houlbrook |
| * Mr N.V. Williams | * Mr C. McGuinness (Chairman) |
| * Mr R. Wilson | Ms H. Norford |
| | * Mr M. Oldknow |

- * *Present*
- V *Attended virtually*

- Mr A. McGill (Chief Executive)
- * Dr D. Hickman (Executive Officer)
- * Mr R. Brown (Senior Engineer)
- * Mr A. Malin (Senior Operations Manager)
- * Mr D. Braddy (Operations Manager)
- * Mrs N. Hind (Finance Manager)
- * Mrs C. Davies (Corporate Services Manager)

- * *In attendance*

The Chairman decided to go through the agenda in a different order, leaving Finance and Estimates for discussion last. He welcomed new members Mr R. Hopkins and Mr R. Wilson and members introduced themselves.

2023.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs A. McGill, R. Durdy, C. Crowe, and J. Hoare.

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2023.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

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2023.3 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

2023.4 BOARD MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of a meeting of the Board held on the 25th November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

2023.5 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Rating Land

Members had previously brought to attention that some areas of land within the Board's boundary had been excluded from rating. Officers had reviewed legal documents and the Board's surveyor had undertaken a desktop review of the areas to try and ascertain a reason for their exclusion. Officers did not have the definitive sealed maps for the predecessor Board and would investigate further and bring a recommendation to a future meeting. In response to Mr M. Brooke, the Finance Manager confirmed that it was unlikely that officers would have the details for rating for this in the 2023/24 year.

(b) Thorne/Crowle Solar Farm Development

The Board's Planning and Developmental Control Officer had informed the developer of the Board's requirements regarding Byelaw compliance and consents that could be required, commuted sums to cover future maintenance, and surface water runoff. The application would involve crossing of some Board maintained watercourses and officers would monitor this to ensure there was no bank slippage as the soil type in this area was particularly soft. Mr M. Brooke expressed concern about the impact of this development upon the Board's systems. In response to Mr C. McGuinness stated that the application would likely go to the Secretary of State for a decision. The Senior Engineer confirmed that this was currently only at the scoping stage.

(c) Rationalisation of Pumping Stations

Modelling was still in progress to explore potential future options, some of which may be available by June 2023 at which point officers would expect to be contacted by the Environment Agency before the modelling scenarios could be developed into delivery options. It was expected that the Environment Agency would then commence to organise and lead engagement with landowners and partners as part of the options development process. In response to concerns raised by Mr M. Brooke, the Senior Engineer confirmed that the Dirtiness Project Team were looking at all feasible options to ensure there would not be any detriment to land drainage in the area. Mr C. McGuinness reassured members that a full report with various options would be presented to the Board for consideration. Mr I. Dixon emphasised the need for proper consultation with landowners on any proposals and suggested that the National Farmers' Union should also be included.

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2023.6 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Senior Operations Manager present a report highlighting the following points. The Health and Safety Executive had officially removed its Covid-19 guidelines, however, Consortium staff were still required to take a test if displaying symptoms. Home-working facilities remained in place and site-based staff that were mostly lone-working were to inform their line manager if they tested positive for advice on whether they could continue to work if they felt well enough.

There had been two accidents/incidents across the Consortium since the last meeting, one of which was within the Board's area. This involved a utilities strike by a contractor but no injuries were sustained.

Time off with unrelated to work stress, depression and anxiety had increased and was being monitored. The Consortium provided access to a service offering of a wide range of help and advice including 24/7 GP access which had positive feedback from staff.

Hand/arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) was being monitored closely with regular HAVS training and measures in place for anyone affected.

Risk assessments and safe systems of work were in place along with regular tool box talks.

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2023.7 OPERATIONS REPORT

(a) Winter Maintenance Works

The Senior Operations Manager presented the following proposed winter programme for 2022/23:

Drain Name	Catchment	Description of Works	Length (m)	Quotation
Common Drain DED311400	Cuckoo Lane	Remove Restriction Slips Repairs Toe Boarding	5 60 195	£24,175 (approved)
Thorne Golf Course Drain DED300300	Kirton Lane	Toe Piling Reforming Tree and Bushing	30 250 400	£28,700
Brosley Drain DED311500	Cuckoo Lane	Slips Repairs Toe piling	200	£27,173
Total (£)			1,140m	£80,048

The funds required to undertake the works on Thorne Golf Course Drain and Brosley Drain would be taken from the remaining budgets held within the 2021 and 2022 reforming budgets which currently stood at £49,559.23. The combined spend of £55,872.50 required to undertake the work on the two additional schemes represents an overspend in the reforming of £6,313.27, this overspend would be counteracted by the underspend in the 2022/23 flailing and weedcutting budgets. Officers recommended that the above quotations received in respect of Thorne Golf Course Drain and Brosley Drain be accepted.

The following proposed winter works programme for 2023/24 was presented:

Drain Name	Catchment	Description of Works	Length (m)
Pissy Beds Drain DED290300	Wikewell	Remove Fallen Tree Remove Tree Restricting Flow	25
Top Boating Dike (Elmhirst) DED261100	New Zealand	Culvert Installation	25
Howells Low Bank Drain DED210200	Good Cop	Bottleneck between bridges	20

Boating Dike Drain DED350500	Dirtness	Desilting	4,741
Westmoor Drain Outfall DED220300	Waterton Hall	Slip Repairs	1,272
Kingswood Golf Course Drain DED290300	Wikewell	Slip Repairs Tree and Bushing Access Improvements	2,100
North Idle Drain DED170800 (SSSI)	Hatfield Waste Drain	Tree and Bushing	550
Low Bank Drain DED210300	Good Cop	Slip Repairs	4,273
M180 South Soak Drain (West) DED210800	Good Cop	Slip Repairs Tree and Bushing	879
M180 South Soak Drain DED211000	Good Cop	Slip Repairs Tree and Bushing	800
Gatewood Lane Drain 2 DED120600	Candy Farm North	Reforming and Tree Planting	400
Total (m)			15,085

RESOLVED

That the quotations received in respect of maintenance and improvement works on Thorne Golf Course at a cost of £28,700 and Brosley Drain at a cost of £27,173 be approved.

(b) Summer Maintenance Works

It was reported that for the 2022 summer season, 95% of flailing and 94% of weedcutting had been completed with remaining sections only left incomplete due to high value root crops preventing access. Access issues affecting 8,564 metres of watercourse had been identified by Colwill Contracting and improvements to these areas would be formulated with a view of including any remedial works in future winter works programmes.

Officers confirmed that the summer maintenance programme had progressed well with good reporting and liaison from the contractors.

The Senior Operations Manager reported that maintenance of the watercourses on the table below had not been included in the summer works programme as these were not identified as Board maintained on the mapping system.

Number	Area	Catchment	Length (m)
1	Hatfield Chase	Dirtness	765
2	Hatfield Chase	Good Cop	549
3	Hatfield Chase	Good Cop (currently filled in)	-175
4	Hatfield Chase	Good Cop	404
5	Hatfield Chase	Candy Farm North	203
6	Hatfield Chase	Tunnel Pits North	100
7	Hatfield Chase	Candy Farm North	789
8	Hatfield Chase	Bull Hassocks	293
9	Finningley	Idle Stop	387

10	Finningley	Park Drain	334
11	Finningley	Langholme	690
Total (m)			4,339

Evidence suggested that historically these had been maintained by the Board, however, it was unclear as to who had been paying for the works to be carried out. Officers estimated that at an additional £5,500 per annum would be required should the Board decide to formally adopt these watercourses and recommended that they be included in this year's programme but that a full review be undertaken before formal adoption by the Board. The additional cost for 2023/24 could be met from the flailing and weedcutting budget. Mr C. McGuinness agreed that a full review would be required to ensure these watercourses met the criteria for adoption. He also asked members to forward any information they had regarding these watercourses to Officers so that this could be considered.

RESOLVED

That the above sections of watercourse be included in the summer weedcutting programme at a cost of £5,500 for one year and that Officers undertake a review of these watercourses to ascertain whether they meet the criteria for formal adoption by the Board.

(c) Strategic Ordinary Watercourses

Officers reported that the recent Strategic Ordinary Watercourse (SOW) review had identified the following additional watercourses. SOWs are watercourses that serves or pose a risk of flooding to a number of properties, businesses, infrastructure or valuable environmental sites and were regularly monitored with early cutting being undertaken in advance of the summer cutting season if necessary where weedgrowth was prevalent.

Drain Name	Catchment	Length (m)
Low Bank Drain DED210300	Good Cop	4273
Low Crow Tree Bank Drain DED210700	Good Cop	263
M180 South Soak Drain DED211000	Good Cop	1272
Woodhouse Sewer Drain DED211200	Good Cop	247
Bull Moors Drain DED211100	Good Cop	245
Far Common Drain DED211300	Good Cop	880
Stonehill Drain DED211400	Good Cop	971
Total (m)		8,151

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2023.8 ASSET RENEWAL AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS

The Senior Engineer presented members with updates on the Engineering Schemes for note as below:

(a) High Level South Pumping Station

The automatic weedscreen cleaner had been refurbished and reinstalled at the station.

(b) Elmhirst Pumping Station

An order had been placed with AIM Electrical Ltd to raise the remote junction box to a level above flood risk and these works were due to be carried out in January 2023.

(c) Idle Stop Pumping Station

Quotations were being sought for refurbishment of the second Sulzer pump.

(d) Drain Safety Platforms and Weedscreen Cleaners on Balby Drain (DE19456) and White Rose Way (DE19455)

Designs for the raking platform/weedscreen on Balby Drain and the new weedscreen at White Rose Way had been received from Althon and approved and delivery was expected towards the end of February 2023. An order had been placed with Eco-Power for installation at both sites as soon as the materials arrived.

(e) Low Ellers Pumping Station

Pump 3 which had previously been reinstalled had been found not to work correctly. The Contracts Manager and an engineer from Industrial Pumps Limited attended site with the intention of making final adjustments with the pump in-situ. This was not possible therefore Industrial Pumps were due to return to site with a crane to lift the pump out and carry out the necessary adjustment in February 2023.

(f) Electricity Costs - New Contract with Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO)

After extensive research, it was found that ESPO were able to offer the most affordable rates to the Board. A contract was entered into for the out of contract pumping stations after discussion and agreement with the Chairman. This was fixed until 30th September 2023 at which point rates would be adjusted for the following 12 month period.

The average day rate was 34.4 pence per KWh and the average night rate was 24.79 pence per KWh giving an overall average of 30.5 pence per KWh. The lowest standing charge was £1.06 per day for some of the Board's smallest pumping stations and the highest was £38.44 per day for Wikewell Pumping Station.

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2023.9 DRAINAGE RATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

Drainage rates outstanding at 9th January 2023 totalled £2,665.38; an overall rate collection to date of 99.73%.

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2023.10 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

Officers had received the amended Public Sector Cooperations Agreement (PSCA) Schedule 3 which re-engaged the partnership approach that had previously been in

place between the Board and the Environment Agency (EA). The EA had indicated that an extension of the generic maintenance window may have been possible to allow for the undertaking of maintenance works that were not completed during the last cutting season.

The Operations Manager reported that there were six watercourses on the schedule for next year and it was hoped Diggin Dyke and Low Suction Drain would also be included.

Mr M. Brooke highlighted ongoing concerns regarding lack of maintenance on Tunnel Pits North and the River Torne and stated that land at Sandtoft was still under water. Officers continued to press the Environment Agency to undertake maintenance of the main rivers.

There was continuing frustration from members regarding the lack of funding for revenue works (particularly as the unspent capital fund was not being used) and the refusal from the EA/DEFRA to acknowledge the importance of channel maintenance and include this with the asset.

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2023.11 DELEGATED MATTERS – PLANNING, BYELAWS AND SUPERVISORY ROLE

(a) Byelaw Applications

No byelaw applications had been granted under delegated authority since the last meeting.

(b) Section 23 Applications

No section 23 consents had been granted since the last meeting.

(c) Planning Applications

Officers had reviewed 12 planning applications since the last Board meeting and made comments relating to surface water drainage. No objections had been raised.

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2023.12 ASSOCIATION OF DRAINAGE AUTHORITIES (ADA)

The Executive Officer reported that an invoice for £4,480 in respect of annual membership had been received from ADA. It was noted that the Chief Executive would be writing to ADA (at the request of the Trent Valley Board) expressing particular areas of concern with which the Board required support and representation and this would be done on behalf of all the Consortium boards.

ADA was seeking expressions of interest for the position of Chair of the Technical and Environmental Committee; the successful applicant would also become a vice chair of ADA and have a Director's position on ADA's Board. Members were asked to contact the Corporate Services Manager if interested in the position.

It was also reported that the ADA Environmental Good Governance Workshop was due to be held on 2nd February 2023 at Thorney and members were encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED

That ADA membership for 2023/24 be approved.

2023.13 STAFFING

There was nothing further to update.

2023.14 FINANCE

(a) Management Accounts for the period ending 30th November 2022

The Finance Manager presented the attached management accounts for the period ending 30th November 2022 which showed a positive variance of £15,111. The majority of this related to the income for Huxterwell Pumping Station electricity costs relating to the previous year but recharged in the current financial year. The 2022/23 estimates allowed for a deficit budget of £41,800 where the shortfall in funds would be met from general reserves. The outturn report indicated that after allowing for the noted expected overspends and savings, the expected deficit would further worsen to a deficit of £141,855.88. The Senior Engineer reported that there was a delay in changing electricity supplier due to Npower insisting the account was in deficit; this was caused by invoices going through Woldmarsh which took up to three months. Officers had given severance notice to Npower and would be applying for the MPAN numbers to transfer the account to ESPO as soon as possible. The Board had sufficient cash reserves to absorb the additional net costs generated by the increase in electricity prices in the current financial year.

The cash surplus at the 31st March 2023 was expected to be £406,650.44; 35.66% of net operating costs.

The Finance Manager also presented the attached balanced sheet for members' information.

RESOLVED

That the attached Management Accounts for the period ending 30th November 2022 be approved.

(b) Cash and Bank Reserves as at 30th November 2022

It was noted that £1,557,265.16 was currently invested in three instant access accounts at an interest rate of 0%. The Finance Manager reported that a sum of £52,792.51 had been paid on the 19th January 2023 as a final settlement to Natural England relating to Thorne Moors. Lloyds Bank would be instructed to close the bank account after settling any remaining bank charges for the month. It was noted that the Board was able to retain £10,000 of funds as part of the contract.

Nine loans totalling £359,145.18 remained outstanding.

Mr M. Oldknow queried why the Board was not receiving any interest on the balances. In response, the Finance Manager confirmed that she would be looking at transferring money into an interest-bearing account now that work on the estimates and electricity costs had been completed.

RESOLVED

That the Board's cash balances and borrowings be noted.

(c) Payments over £500

The attached schedule of payments over £500 was circulated for approval.

RESOLVED

That the schedule of payments over £500 made since the last Board meeting be approved.

2023.15 ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

The Finance Manager presented the attached report and detailed estimates for 2023/24 along with the five-year plan for members consideration and approval. Due to the unprecedented increase in electric costs facing the Board, Officers had reviewed all aspects of the estimates, including the funding of schemes, the timing of loans and their associated repayments, the procurement of plant and equipment, the utilisation of the Board's other capital reserves; as a means to lessen the impact of the impending electric price increases and the impact on the local councils and rate payers. The Executive Officer highlighted that officers had thoroughly investigated the above and any possible measures to save money or lessen costs where possible. He also highlighted that Officers were pushing for support from MPs and ADA in the current financial situation.

The 2023/24 estimate was for a net expenditure of £1,258,275 taking into consideration estimated income and expenditure. With officers' recommendations of a 19.5% increase on agricultural drainage rates and special levies, this would result in a deficit of £38,717. It was noted that any deficit within the estimates must be met from reserves. The Finance Manager reported that an increase of 19.5% would reduce the surplus cash reserves to 30.17% of operating costs and a monetary value of £367,933. Should the Board suffer a wet period before March or in the next financial year, additional costs to the Board could be up to £150,000 for electricity alone, not taking into consideration costs for labour, bank repairs or pump repairs. The Finance Manager highlighted that the Board should consider the percentage of operating costs but also the monetary amount within the reserves and must take into consideration any unexpected or unrated for expenditure.

The Finance Manager reported that officers had proposed a rate in order to retain balances within the Board's policy of 30% of net operating costs. In response to Mr N.V. Williams' concerns, the Finance Manager confirmed that if the Board was in a better position than estimated and electricity costs reduced, the Board could bring down the rate the following year. Mr C. McGuinness emphasised that the council had supported the Board over the last few years but was now also facing significantly higher costs and asked the Board to bear this in mind when setting the rate. Mr M. Oldknow stated that the estimates had been prepared based on what had always been done and queried whether there were any changes or efficiencies that could be made to reduce costs. The Finance Manager confirmed that the biggest costs faced by the Board were electricity and maintenance both of which were in contract and could not be adjusted.

Mr C. McGuinness highlighted that many people and organisations were facing the same financial crisis and that a 16/17% increase on drainage rates and special levies would be sensible. The Finance Manager stated that if electricity costs were to worsen, they would pose a large risk to the Board's reserves and that weather and

consumption could not be predicted so the Board should allow for any circumstances that may occur. In response to Mr N.V. Williams, the Senior Engineer confirmed that the contract the Board had entered into for electricity with ESPO was fixed to September 2023 and would then go onto a flexible rate. Mr M. Oldknow believed that such an amount of cash that would be sat in the Board's reserves following a 19.5% increase was high and that a rate under 19.5% should be considered. Mr P. Horne agreed that £367,933 was a lot to have in reserves.

Mr L. Garrett suggested that the Board should also take into consideration the following year's figures as the electricity crisis could continue. The Finance Manager confirmed that a 16% increase for 2023/24 would mean the Board would require a 23% increase the following year to meet the reserve policy amount. Mr I. Dixon stated he would feel comfortable with a percentage of net operating costs of 20%. The Finance Manager reported that 20% of operating costs would give around £220,000 in reserves meaning they could run out in an emergency and with electricity costs due on demand and the Board unable to have an overdraft on accounts or borrow from banks, this would not be a feasible option. In response to Mr C. McGuinness, the Finance Manager confirmed that a 16% increase would give £332,000 in reserves, a net operating percentage of 28.06%. Mr N.V. Williams believed that the only way to start making a change in the current crisis was to go below inflation rate. He also queried whether the Board had access to any external funds in periods of wet weather and the Senior Engineer confirmed that they only did in a flood or a concentrated window of wet weather.

Mr L. Garrett was comfortable with an increase below 19.5% but not as low as 16%. In response to Mr R. Hopkins, the Senior Engineer confirmed that pump failures were more likely to occur within concentrated windows and that repairs could be deferred but would leave a catchment not functioning and would increase risk to properties and land. Members discussed what a 17% increase would look like and the Finance Manager reported that this would give reserves of £342,398; 26.68% of operating costs. The Board would then require a 21% increase the following financial year to achieve 30% of operating costs. Mr C. McGuinness therefore proposed an increase on drainage rates and special levies of 17% which was seconded by Mr M. Oldknow. Members went to a vote and were unanimously in favour of an increase of 17% on agricultural drainage rates and special levies for the 2023/24 year.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the attached estimates of income and expenditure for the year commencing 1st April 2023 be approved.
- (b) That the amounts to be raised by means of drainage rates in respect of agricultural land and buildings, and special levies on the local charging authorities for the year commencing 1st April 2023 be as follows:
 - (i) by drainage rates levies in respect of agricultural land and buildings - £118,271
 - (ii) by special levy on Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council - £1,040,309
 - (iii) by special levy on North Lincolnshire Council - £19,802
 - (iv) by special levy on Bassetlaw District Council - £15,641

- (c) That the drainage rate for the financial year commencing 1st April 2023 be made and sealed in the sum total of 7.295 pence in the pound
- (d) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2023 on Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council be made and sealed in the sum of £1,040,309
- (e) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2023 on North Lincolnshire Council be made and sealed in the sum of £19,802
- (f) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2023 on Bassetlaw District Council be made and sealed in the sum of £15,641
- (g) That the statutory record of levies be made up.

2023.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN