

Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Friday, 25th March 2022 at 10.00 a.m via Microsoft Teams.

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

* *Present*

- * Mr A. McGill (Chief Executive)
- * 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*

2022.20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absences were received from Messrs M. Brooke, I. Dixon, L. Garrett, G. Parker and G. Platt and Ms H. Norford.

2022.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2022.22 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

2022.23 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

It was noted that Mr M. Houlbrook had given his apologies for the last meeting.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28th January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

2022.24 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 2022.10 Winter Maintenance Works (Page 5) - In response to Mr P. Cornish, the Operations Manager presented an estimate of £22,422 for Axholme to undertake the work (contractors' costs were in excess of £30k). He confirmed that materials had already been purchased at a cost of around £8,000 as prices were expected to rise, however, the work would have to fit in with other commitments already in the programme and a further report would be presented to the next meeting.

Regarding PSCA works, the Chief Executive confirmed that a meeting with the Environment Agency was scheduled for next week.

In response to Mr M. Oldknow, the Senior Engineer confirmed that the Planning and Enforcement Officer was pulling together a case ready for formal notice to be served regarding the Byelaw contravention on Old Thorne Road.

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2022.25 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Senior Operations Manager reported that the Consortium's Covid Risk Assessment was being reviewed and would be updated to reflect recent changes in legislation.

Changes to regulations on the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) would come into force in April 2022, the Consortium already provided PPE to all staff and complied with the changes.

There had been three incidents across the Consortium since the last Board meeting but none reported in the Doncaster East area. The Senior Operations Manager presented a summary of incidents across the Consortium since April 2021, three of which were in the Doncaster East area. He further presented a summary of the Health and Safety statistics from December 2021 highlighting that the forestry and construction industries, those closest to the Board's operations, had the highest number of incidents.

Mr M. Houlbrook asked whether the process for reporting incidents had changed due to home-working. The Senior Operations Manager reported that the same process for reporting incidents was being followed - forms were completed by the person involved in the incident, reviewed by their line manager and then sent to him for review before being signed off by the Chief Executive.

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2022.26 RISK REGISTER

The Corporate Services Manager presented the updated Risk Register for members information. The specific and long-term risks of note for the Consortium and Doncaster East were:

- (a) Finance - Areas of improvement identified included reporting, updated delegated authority and authorised signatories.
- (b) Data Protection - Review of the risk of breach or failure, including audit of processes and updating policies.
- (c) Asset Failure - Risk to the Board from any failures or breakdown of assets, including improved handover procedures.
- (d) Emergency Procedures - Review of procedures, resourcing of equipment and training of emergency relief staff to be undertaken.
- (e) Resources - Review of resources including succession planning and the Consortium Business plan.
- (f) Health and Safety - Improved reporting and recording of incidents and analysing trends, continued use of toolbox talks and briefings to keep staff informed.

- (g) Board members training - Training would be reviewed and a training day arranged.
- (h) Environmental Brief - Annual briefings by the Board's Environmental Officer to Direct Labour Organisations and Contractors to ensure compliance.
- (i) Governance - Members had been contacted regarding declarations of interests.

Mr M. Houlbrook queried whether flooding issues and cyber attacks should be included in the Risk Register. The Chief Executive stated that the dynamic risk register included any specific flooding risks associated with slips, issues with pumps and catchments and other current risks across the departments. Regarding IT security, the Consortium had measures in place to protect against cyber attacks and also to back up systems offsite. Data protection training was also given to all staff to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities, e.g. not to leave laptops in the car or take sensitive information out of the office.

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2022.27 OPERATIONS REPORT

(a) Maintenance

The Senior Operations Manager reported on the winter works programme; at the time of writing the report 400 metres of reforming/tree and bushing works had been completed on Gatewood Lane Drain 2. Work on six watercourses remained outstanding.

The 2022/23 winter works programme was presented for information. Job cards for 2021 had highlighted several drains that required an inspection and if necessary, these would be added to the programme and work reprioritised.

The contract for summer maintenance work had been awarded to Colwill Contracting for a period of three years with an option to extend by two further periods of 12 months. Officers were liaising with the contractors and preparing job cards ready for work to commence on 15th July 2022. The Senior Operations Manager would be meeting with them to ensure they were aware of the Board's health and safety requirements and environmental responsibilities.

The Operations Manager showed photographs of some of the work undertaken. He stated that emergency drain repairs had been undertaken on Middle Moor Drain to clear three culverts which were holding up water and the level had immediately dropped by three feet as soon as the blockages were removed. The winter works were being undertaken by contractors and, where possible, any materials were being purchased whilst prices were lower.

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(b) Use of Red Diesel

The Senior Operations Manager reported that following extensive communications between the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and Treasury, confirmation had been received that internal drainage boards could use red diesel on watercourses serving agricultural land. Officers had undertaken an assessment of all Board maintained watercourse and confirmed that all but two were linked to agricultural land (one of these was culverted, the other was Nettle

Common Drain 229m). The Senior Operations Manager therefore recommended that the Board continue to use red diesel for maintenance of Board maintained watercourses but to use white for transportation. The Chief Executive stated that the Environment Agency had moved to white diesel and he hoped that the additional cost of this would not reduce the amount of work they were able to undertake. Members expressed thanks to ADA for the work put in to clarify this position.

It was noted that the contractor had reduced the price by 3p per linear metre which amounted to £18,000 (a 5% reduction) in the contract price.

RESOLVED

That the Board continue to use red diesel for maintenance and improvement works on Board maintained watercourses.

2022.28 ASSET RENEWAL AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS

The following updates were presented by the Senior Engineer:

(a) Telemetry System Replacement

Communication issues were gradually being resolved.

(b) Installation of Automatic Weedscreen Cleaner at Huxterwell Pumping Station

The refurbished weedrake from Parsons Carr Pumping Station had been installed and was fully operational.

(b) Park Drain Slips

Options were still being investigated.

(c) Balby Carr and Low Ellers Pumping Stations

Divers were due to inspect the pump chambers and remove any debris on 4th April and their findings would be reported at the next Board meeting.

(e) Unity Connect Development

An issue with pump number 2 at Cuckoo Lane was being rectified. The Agreement was with the Board's solicitor for engrossment ready for signature.

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2022.29 FINANCE

The Finance Manager presented the attached report. The Chief Executive stated that the taking of planned loans needed to be considered now due to the exponential change in rates; Officers would be reviewing this after the meeting. The current surplus cash position at 31st January 2022 showed a healthy surplus cash reserve of 52.23% which meant sufficient funds were available to pay for the additional cost of the maintenance contracts. The Chairman stated that the Board would take into account the level of reserves when setting the rate/special levies for 2022/24. In response, the Finance Manager asked members to consider the amount, rather than the percentage and would not advise bringing these down to the recommended 30%. The Chairman was aware of the need to retain sufficient reserves to cover a flood event, stating that recently there had been three storms in six days. The Chief Executive recalled that the Board had previously agreed to review a reserve for flood events.

Regarding the Thorne Moors Account, the Chief Executive confirmed that Officers were liaising with Natural England regarding the transfer of funds.

In response to the Vice-Chairman, the Chief Executive confirmed that there was no benefit in paying off loans early as these were fixed and there was no recovery of interest.

Mr C. Crowe referred to the energy costs and queried whether the Board was tied into contract with Woldmarsh and, if so for how long. He understood that other boards suffering significant cost increases were reviewing alternative suppliers. The Finance Manager did not have the detail to hand but confirmed that electricity came from Npower via Woldmarsh. Mr R. Durdy reported that Woldmarsh contracts usually ran from the beginning of September and he expected them to be on the ball already talking to other suppliers.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Management Accounts for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st January 2022 be approved.
- (b) That cash balances and borrowings be noted.
- (c) That the schedule of payments be approved.
- (d) That a report on electricity tariffs and renewals be reported to the next Board meeting.

2022.30 DRAINAGE RATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

Drainage rates outstanding at 10th March 2022 totalled £321.46; an overall rate collection to date of 99.96%.

The Vice-Chairman asked whether liability orders had been granted by the court in January. The Finance Manager confirmed that the Rating Officer had requested these and would update at the next meeting on what had been granted and whether these had been paid or referred to the bailiffs for collection.

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2022.31 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (EA) AND PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

(a) Public Sector Cooperation Works

Officers reported that a DRAFT programme of Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) works had been received for the following drains and a meeting was due to be held shortly with the EA to discuss these in detail:

Diggin Dyke

River Torne Soak Drain (Candy Farm and Tunnel Pits Catchments)

Low Bank Suction Drain

Woodhouse Sewer

River Torne

The Chief Executive confirmed that the meeting would also focus on the River Torne. It was agreed that members would pass on any concerns to Officers beforehand. The Chief Executive had already flagged up those drains that

members had highlighted as a concern. Regarding the work on the River Torne, he was pushing for a policy change to recognise the whole of the drain network as the capital asset rather than just the pumping station. The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the EA had £4m of improvements for the Torne and the Board's Officers were working closely with the EA to drive delivery of works on the ground.

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(b) All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Flood and Drought Management (APPG)

The inaugural meeting of the APPG entitled 'Are Our Flood Risk Priorities Right?' was held on 28th February 2022 via MS Teams, attended by members from the House of Lords and House of Parliament.

The meeting was chaired by Mr A. Percy MP and the Board's Chief Executive had given a presentation titled 'Why Not Sustainable Flood and Drought Management? Areas of Special Drainage Need'. Another presentation by Ms A. Green, Policy Advisor on Climate Change and Water at the Country Landowners' Association titled 'The Role of Landowners in Sustainable Flood Management' was also given.

The Chief Executive had explained the work of the IDBs and the areas they protected, highlighting that this included critical infrastructure, industry and tourism, as well as high-grade agricultural land and local communities. Examples of poorly maintained main rivers were presented together with examples of what could be achieved e.g. the work on the Steeping River. He stressed the following points:

- (a) Current policy sees the main rivers/highland water carriers not being maintained to the correct standard in IDB areas (examples of the Torne, Idle, Devon had been shown).
- (b) Current policy funding is geared to protect people and property does not in its current format work in areas of special drainage need.
- (c) The Current Policy needs adjusting to recognise the importance and need for ongoing investment in the systems that exist.
- (d) We need recognition that the capital system is catchment wide not just the bricks and mortar of the pumping station at the end.
- (e) If we are serious about carbon reduction, we need to invest capital funds across the whole system to improve channel maintenance

Further meetings were planned, and the Chief Executive had offered his services to the Group and ADA to inform their discussions on the way ahead.

The Chairman stated that there had been four local M.P.s in attendance so very good local representation.

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(d) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Meeting

Similar points to those above had also been made by the Chief Executive and ADA at a meeting with Senior Officers of DEFRA and the EA on 23rd February

2022. They were receptive and keen to hold a further meeting in the near future having had time to consider the points raised.

The Chairman emphasised the imbalance between capital works (e.g. pumping station refurbishments which did attract grant in aid) and revenue works (e.g. channel maintenance which did not) and stated that the RFCC had driven home this point too.

The Chief Executive stated that there must be a change in policy to enable us to reach a position where we didn't have to force things through in spite of the regulations but could work with them to achieve a positive outcome. He hoped to have a date for a further meeting with DEFRA soon.

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2022.32 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

(a) National Internal Drainage Board Annual Biometrics Survey

A report on the ADA Biometrics for the year ending 31 March 2021 for the WMC demonstrated:

- (i) Species recorded included water voles, eels and invasive species such as Giant Hogweed and Japanese knotweed.
- (ii) Over 52 Barn Owl Boxes monitored.
- (iii) 42 hectares of grazing marsh and low input grassland.
- (iv) Three fish friendly pumps installed.
- (v) Control of Floating Pennywort, Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed improvements.
- (vi) 43 staff and nine contractors received biodiversity training.

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(b) River Idle Management Partnership

Officers reported that the report by Soil Water Catchment Management was now available. A presentation with Natural England and the Environment Agency alongside the River Idle Management Partnership was planned.

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(c) Betwixt Fen - DRAFT Feasibility Report

Officers reported that Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) had commissioned a report to look at options for wildlife enhancement on Betwixt Fen, a site between Mother Drain and the River Torne to the north of New Rossington. The Board had not been consulted until recently and the report as it stood was not adequate to support a consent application. YWT had, therefore, commissioned further work and would now be liaising with the Board's officers.

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(d) Tree Planting

Mr M. Houlbrook reported that free trees were available from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Year and suggested the Board may wish to participate. He would pass on details to the operations team and planting would be considered if there were any suitable sites away from Board maintained watercourses.

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2022.33 BYELAW APPLICATION – IDLE BANK, WROOT

As part of a redevelopment at Bull Hassocks Farm, a 2.4 metre high mesh fence had been partially erected along the boundary within nine metres of the Board maintained South Idle Drain. When this had come to Officers' attention the site owners were notified and stopped work immediately.

Prior to the redevelopment of the site, the area was very overgrown and maintenance of the watercourse had always been undertaken from Idle Bank. Although the site had now been cleared, several large cherry trees remained.

Officers recommended that consent be granted for the fence subject to appropriate conditions.

RESOLVED

That consent be granted for the erection of a 2.4 metre high mesh fence to be erected within nine metres but no closer than three metres of the Board maintained South Idle Drain on the boundary of Bull Hassocks Farm (as shown on the attached plan) subject to the landowner indemnifying the Board against any damage that may be caused to the fence from the Board's works and subject to their agreement to remove the fence at their cost if the Board required access in the future.

2022.34 DELEGATED MATTERS

(a) Byelaw Applications

Officers reported the following consents which had been granted under delegated authority since the last Board meeting:

DEIDB/LDC/2021/017 Installation of well points with discharge into the Board maintained Nettleholme Lane Drain to facilitate the construction of (Middle) pumping station at national grid reference 466631 411034 in the parish of Hatfield.

DEIDB/LDC/2021/018 Installation of well points with discharge into the Board maintained Crook Tree Lane Drain to facilitate the construction of (Southern) pumping station at national grid reference 466571 410638 in the parish of Hatfield.

DEIDB/LDC/2021/022 Construction of two concrete bridges with associated abutments and haul roads over and within nine metres of the Board maintained Nettleholme Lane Drain at national grid reference 466688 411082 in the parish of Hatfield.

DEIDB/LDC/2022/003 Installation of well points with discharge into the Board maintained Pudding and Dip Drain to facilitate the construction of

foul sewer manholes at national grid reference 465666 410384 in the parish of Hatfield.

DEIDB/LDC/2022/004 Surface water outfall to riparian watercourse within the Boards district. The Trolleybus Museum, Belton Road in the parish of Sandtoft and national grid reference 474774 408198.

DEIDB/LDC/2022/005 Infill of approximately 275 metres of redundant riparian watercourse to facilitate development of a distribution centre at national grid reference 466705 411533 west of M18 motorway, east of Cuckoo Lane, north of Moto Services in the parish of Hatfield.

DEIDB/LDC/2022/012 Outfall to package treatment plant within Board's district Stud Farm, Lindrick, Tickhill, Doncaster, at national grid reference 459279 392667 in the parish of Tickhill.

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(b) Section 23 Applications

Officers reported the following Section 23 consent which had been granted under delegated authority since the last Board meeting:

DEIDB/LDC/2021/021 Relinquishment of a redundant section of Cuckoo Lane Outfall Drain between chainage 150 to 550 metres. Watercourse to then be infilled at national grid reference 465843 410692 in the parish of Hatfield.

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(c) Planning Applications

Officers reported on eight planning applications which had been dealt with since the last meeting. Appropriate comments relating to surface water drainage had been made.

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2022.35 ELECTION OF MEMBERS

The Corporate Services Manager reported that the term of office for elected members would expire on 31st October 2022. In accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Land Drainage (Election of Drainage Boards) Regulations 1938 and the Land Drainage (Election of Internal Drainage Boards (Amendment)) Regulations 1997, the election process would commence shortly with the preparation of the Registers of Electors.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Election date be set for 28th October 2022.
- (b) That the Corporate Services Manager (Carol Davies) be appointed as Returning Officer and the Data Protection Officer (Amy Quirke) as Deputy Returning Officer.

2022.36 REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

The Corporate Services Manager reported that all members had been asked to review and update their Register of Interest forms and asked for any outstanding to be

returned as soon as possible. This exercise was undertaken annually for good governance.

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2022.37 STAFFING

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Technical Engineering Manager had been promoted to Senior Engineer following the resignation of the Engineer. He had agreed with the Consortium Chairmen to bring in a senior manager to oversee the management/delivery of projects to enable the Senior Engineer to grow into the position over the next few years and to develop the engineering team. The new postholder would fill the knowledge/experience gap in the Senior Management Team and deputise for the Chief Executive in his absence.

The Chairman stated that recruitment was difficult at the moment and there were several vacancies still to be filled. If necessary, consultants would be employed to ensure the delivery of projects.

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2022.38 THORNE AND CROWLE MOORS SSSI

In accordance with Section 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960, it was agreed to exclude the public from this part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business being discussed.

2022.39 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN