

## Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held on Friday, 23rd June 2022 at 10.00 a.m. at Hatfield Woodhouse Village Hall to discuss Operational Matters raised at the last Board meeting.

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 A. Malin (Senior Operations Manager)

\* Mr D. Braddy (Operations Manager)

\* Mrs C. Davies (Corporate Services Manager)

\* *In attendance*

### 2022.57 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absences were received from Messrs M. Brooke, R. Durdy, J. Hoare, M. Houlbrook, M. Oldknow, G. Platt and Ms H. Norford.

### 2022.58 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr G. Parker's interest as a landowner in the area in question, was noted.

### 2022.59 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

### 2022.60 OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Mr G. Parker expressed concern about the content of the newsletter and Notice of Entry which indicated a change in operational practices, e.g. that the Board would no longer wait for crops to be cleared before entering onto land. Messrs M. Brooke, G. Platt and G. Parker had been contacted by numerous ratepayers in their areas expressing concern about this and Mr Brooke emphasised that this change in working practices had not been approved by the Board. Mr Parker stated that the previous contractor had liaised with landowners and worked around harvest. He further stated that, depending on the rental agreement, landowners may have to reimburse their tenants for any damage caused. Mr Parker stated that all land was gated and the Board would not have access and unless they liaised with the landowners as gates would be locked.

The Chairman understood that the flailing contract had been sub-let to the previous contractor so there would be minimal change to the previous working arrangements. The Notice of Entry was the same as that sent out the previous year and the Chairman

referred to the newsletter which stated that the Board would work with landowners wherever possible to minimise disruption and crop damage. He suggested that the change in contractor this year may have made landowners nervous and that he hoped the meeting with the new contractor today would reassure members that the contractor was fully aware of the need to liaise with landowners prior to entry upon land.

The Chairman asked members to email Officers with details of any queries or complaints relating to matters in their area so that they were fully aware and could deal with any issues.

Mr G. Parker stated that maintenance had always been undertaken later in the year to avoid second cuts. He agreed with the Chief Executive that strategic watercourses needed to be identified and work prioritised on these. Mr G. Parker stated that landowners did not know who would be undertaking the work and that the Board had not communicated this well. In response to the Chief Executive, Mr Parker stated that summer maintenance commenced as soon as the first crop of rape had been harvested which was usually late July.

The Chief Executive stated that where weedgrowth was prevalent, early cutting of strategic watercourses was essential to avoid flooding. The Operations Manager had a list of strategic watercourses which were inspected early in the year to ascertain whether early intervention was necessary. It was agreed that this information needed to be shared with Board members and landowners to ensure all strategic watercourses were identified.

Mr G. Parker did not envisage that landowners would have an issue should work need to be undertaken on those strategic watercourses as long as they were kept informed and properly compensated.

Officers suggested that a public meeting could be arranged if there were issues in a specific area. The Vice-Chairman highlighted that the public meeting in the Dirtiness area which had been delayed because of Covid had still not been rearranged. Mr Parker stated that had this meeting gone ahead, many of the issues raised could have been dealt with.

The Operations Manager would be meeting with the contractors on a weekly basis to discuss progress. Previously it had been extremely difficult to ascertain how the programme was progressing as the liaison had been directly between landowners and the contractor and Officers had not been kept in the loop.

Mr L. Garrett queried whether there was a detailed programme of works and asked for this to be shared. He also queried what was included in the specification. The Operations Manager confirmed that the contract allowed the contractor to work around crops but also to go through crops if necessary. He had discussed both options with the contractor who had confirmed that the programme of works would be completed within 16 weeks if going through crops and in 20 weeks if working around them. The Chief Executive emphasised that other factors such as weather conditions could alter the programme.

#### RESOLVED

- (a) That the list of strategic watercourses be circulated to members to ensure that all had been identified correctly; these were those that may require two cuts each year and protected multiple landowners,

critical infrastructure, industrial sites, residential areas, etc. This would be emailed to members for feedback and if none was received it would be assumed correct. Feedback from ratepayers would also be sought prior to next year's summer cutting programme.

- (b) That the Board consider its operational policy and agree how best to deal with those strategic watercourses.
- (c) That details of any queries or concerns brought to members attention be emailed to Officers to ensure they were fully aware.
- (d) That clear lines of communication be established – the first point of contact for any operational queries being the Operations Manager.
- (e) That the emergency contact number for queries out of hours be noted as 01507 328095 – Duty Officer on call 24/7.
- (f) That a date be set for the public meeting in the Dirtiness catchment to discuss the proposed rationalisation.

#### 2022.61 MEETING WITH THE CONTACTOR

The Contractor, John Colwill, was invited to join the meeting and introductions were made.

The Chairman highlighted that watercourses would be prioritised based on their importance and the areas they protected, he stressed the need for the contractor to be flexible and work with the landowners to arrange access and to minimise crop damage.

The Chief Executive explained that Mr Colwill had previously undertaken the contract in the north of the Board's area and asked him how he went about this. Mr Colwill stated that he had in the past worked closely with the landowners, around crops, and had both tracked and wheeled machines which gave him greater flexibility.

Mr Colwill confirmed that the flailing contract had been sub-let to Edward Bichen (the son of the previous contractor) and Goodlad. Mr Bichen was familiar with the area and the landowners. Mr Colwill stated that he would personally be operating one of the excavators and would be available on the phone should members or ratepayers have any concerns. He assured members that the only time he had run through fields was when the land had been drilled and there had been minimal damage.

The Operations Manager highlighted that the longer the summer programme, the less winter work would be completed. The Chief Executive stated that once a price had been agreed for the winter work, the programme could be reviewed and the work fitted in where possible.

Mr G. Parker asked Officers to push the Environment Agency (EA) for confirmation that work could commence on Diggin Dyke and Woodhouse Sewer. Mr L. Garrett stated that DMBC was pushing this with the EA. The Chairman would like to see a three-to-five-year commitment from the EA for the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement work so that this could be planned into the programme. Mr Parker suggested that contractor, John Moore, could also be approached for a price.

Officers highlighted that any personal information (e.g. name and contact number) passed to the contractor must have the individual's consent.

RESOLVED

- (a) That a letter be sent out to all ratepayers informing them of the new contractor and asking them to contact the Board if they had any concerns, and including contact details for the contractor to arrange access. The letter would include a paragraph under GDPR to clarify whether landowners' contact details could be passed to the contractor.
- (b) That a map showing strategic watercourses be circulated to members for approval.

CHAIRMAN