

Minutes of an Extraordinary Board Meeting held at The Old Willow Works, Beckingham, on Tuesday, 3rd November 2015 at 1.00 p.m.

Elected Members

* Messrs M.A. Harris (Chairman)
* R. Adam (Vice-Chairman)
* A. Barker
* P. Bradwell
* G.R.J. Bramhill
* J. Coggon
* P. Cornish
* K. Durdy
* R. Mason
* M. Wagstaff
* S. White
* vacancy

Nominated by North Lincolnshire Council

* Cllr R. Allcock
* Mr N. Arrand
* Cllr J. Briggs
* Mr R. Chapman
* Mr J. Lee
* Cllr Mrs J. Reed
* Mr J. Smith
* Cllr D. Robinson
* Cllr D.J. Rose
* Mr G. Wilson
* vacancy

Nominated by Bassetlaw District Council

* Cllr Mrs H. Brand
* Cllr Mrs J.M. Sanger

* *Present*

* Messrs A. McGill (Chief Executive)
* D.J. Sisson (Engineer)
* R.P. Mitchell (Director of Operations)
* S. Thackray (Director of Finance)
* R.A. Brown (Engineering Manager)

* *In attendance*

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Mr G.R.J. Bramhill.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs R. Allcock and D. Robinson declared an interest.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

4. ISLE OF AXHOLME STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented the attached governance proposal from the Environment Agency (EA) led joint working group. As requested at the last Board meeting, the extraordinary meeting was called to discuss the matter above and to consider a more simplified governance structure.

The Chairman reported that the EA was slowly pulling back from the maintenance of watercourses. He understood that the various strategies were now being brought together and it was important to have the correct structure in place to take this forward.

The Chief Executive reported that a heavily engineered and complex network of pumps and drains and watercourses had been developed over time to manage water levels and to manage the Isle of Axholme and surrounding low lying areas. There were 14 inland pumping stations owned by the EA and 47 pumping stations owned and operated by the IDBs and over time this management had significantly altered the route of the rivers Torne and Idle.

The availability of land through active water level management over hundreds of years had delivered prime agricultural land, attracted industry, enabled national lines of communication to be established and local communities to grow across a landscape that hitherto suffered from flooding or at best seasonal waterlogging. The following, by no means exhaustive, list illustrated the level and diversity of investment: Keadby Distribution Centre and Power Station; Gas Pipelines and Storage Facilities; Other Pipelines; HM Prison; Robin Hood Airport; M180 and M18 (it was estimated that the cost of raising the motorway was capped at £880M), Railways (it is estimated to cost £640M to rebuild the railway lines around the study area); Benefits in the area stood at an estimated £5,353 Million.

The Chief Executive stated that a broader vision was needed when considering the rationalisation of assets and transfer between agencies so that the most cost efficient system could be established. To ensure that the operation of any assets transferred was sustainable into the future, assets must be restored to the required hydraulic operating efficiency. This would ensure that the systems would be effective when called upon and in such a condition where regular maintenance would make them both sustainable and affordable.

He stated that the Board and other water level management authorities such as the EA were hidebound by process and financial systems which could not be disregarded completely, however, if the Board was enabled to access all of the financial resource and use it to best effect where and for the purpose it was really needed, a sustainable solution might well be possible. It was therefore essential to agree the shape of the Governance structure through which, the Board considered, the Isle of Axholme Strategy could best be delivered. The Board's preferred delivery route would then be reported back to the EA.

Cllr R. Allcock stated that the existing Flood Advisory Group (comprising representatives from all of the bodies responsible for water level management and chaired by the local M.P.) should be used rather than setting up an additional advisory group.

Cllr J. Briggs stated that it was important for the Board to state what it would like its position to be in the future, e.g. which assets should be transferred, to ensure that its systems were in good order otherwise this may be dictated by a third party. He further stated that this should include what funding was required both for maintenance and to bring these up to the required standard. Cllr Briggs felt that the proposed structure needed to be simplified by reducing the number of groups involved.

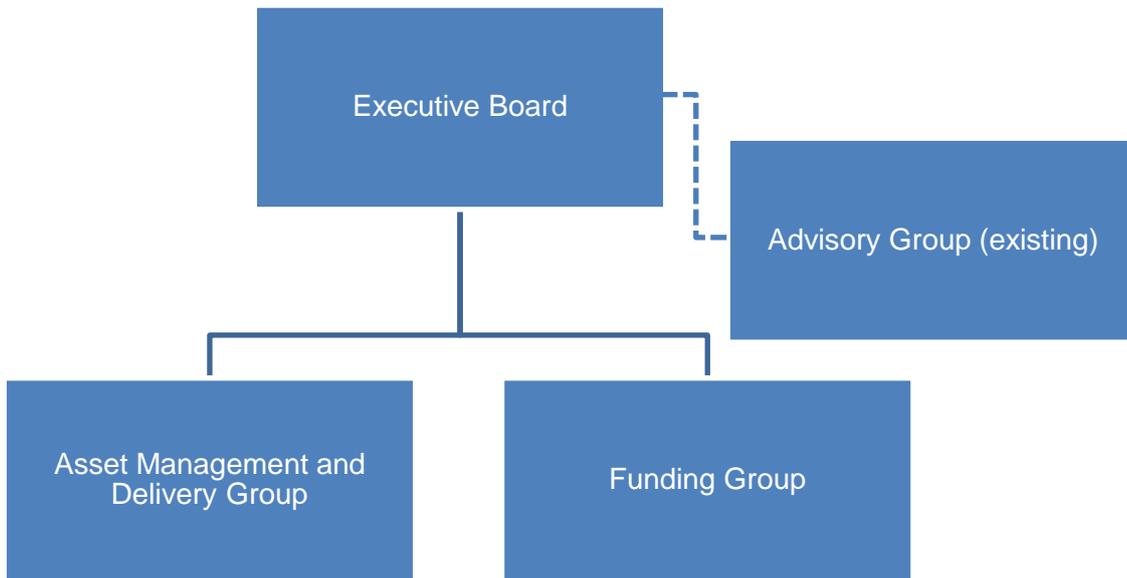
The Vice-Chairman queried whether the Board would have to undertake main river maintenance within the same constraints as the EA or whether the work would be carried out in accordance with the Board's procedures and standards.

Mr J. Coggon suggested that the Board could undertake work through the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement in the short term and this may mean working to the EA's specification, at least initially, but in the long term he would like to see some of the rivers demanded to give the Board the freedom to undertake maintenance to the Board's standards.

The Chairman stated that funding must be sought from the wider catchment and he understood that the Association of Drainage Authorities was pursuing this as such a change would need addressing at Government level. Cllr R. Allcock reported that Partnership Funding Officers had been appointed by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and he understood they would be approaching utilities for partnership funding.

Cllr J. Briggs suggested that a representative from the Fire and Rescue service should also be included in the delivery of the Strategy.

It was agreed to recommend that the following structure be adopted:



- The Executive Board to have responsibility and accountability for delivery of the Isle of Axholme Strategy.
- The Asset Management and Delivery Group and the Funding Group should be closely linked agreeing individual requirements and considering various options such as an upland drainage charge or raising funds through local industrial partnership that would be used to deliver elements of the Strategy.
- The Advisory Group would continue to operate as it did now. Sound communication would be established and its support would be called upon to aid the delivery of the Strategy when required.

It was agreed that a meeting should be held before Christmas 2015 with the Chairman of the RFCC and the EA to agree a timescale, setting out ideally what the Board, as water level managers, wanted to achieve through the delivery of the Isle of Axholme Strategy and when key milestones would be achieved.

RESOLVED

That the above structure be recommended to the Environment Agency for adoption.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN