

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Board held via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference on Tuesday, 7th September 2021, at 10.00 a.m.

<u>Elected Members</u>		<u>Nominated by North Lincolnshire Council</u>	
*	Messrs J. Coggon	*	Cllr R. Allcock
*	P. Cornish	*	Mr I. Bint
*	R. Adam		Cllr J. Briggs
	H. Barton		Mr A. Catherall
	P. Bradwell	*	Mr T. Mitchell
	J.H.T. Bramhill	*	Mr M.D. Pilkington
	Vacancy	*	Cllr Mrs J. Reed
	J. Fretwell		Cllr D. Robinson
*	M.A. Harris		Cllr D.J. Rose
*	R. Mason		Two Vacancies
*	M. Wagstaff		
	M.T. Smith		
		<u>Nominated by Bassetlaw District Council</u>	
		*	Cllr Mrs H. Brand
		*	Cllr Mrs J.M. Sanger
*	<i>Present</i>		
*	Messrs A. McGill (Chief Executive)		
*	N. Kemble (Engineer)		
*	A. Malin (Senior Operations Manager)		
*	D. Braddy (Operations Manager)		
*	Mesdames N. Hind (Finance Manager)		
*	C.B. Davies (Corporate Services Manager)		
*	<i>In attendance</i>		

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Messrs H. Barton, J. Briggs, A. Catherall, J. Fretwell, D. Robinson and M.T. Smith.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that the Environment Agency precept and letter which had been sent regarding this would be discussed under item 7.

The DRAFT Minutes of the meeting held 22nd June 2021 had been circulated for information, these would be confirmed at the November meeting.

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4. COMMON CARRS PUMPING STATION

At the previous meeting members had given approval to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to reach a decision regarding a replacement pump and panel at Common Carrs Pumping Station. Details of the five quotes received from suppliers were provided for information. The decision had been made to install a Zenit TT pump, which provided a smaller installation with good reliability and would greatly improve drainage within the catchment. Low flows would be accommodated as part of the control system. No modifications to the sump would

be required. The supply, installation and commissioning of the pump and control panel would be completed by late November or early December for the sum of £34,960.75.

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5. RESOURCES

The Consortium Committee met on 12th August 2021 to discuss resources required to meet the Board's £36,000,000 planned six-year asset refurbishment programme, which was to include two new builds and 12 schemes in excess of £1,000,000 each. The Committee had recommended that the Board appoint six additional staff to complete this programme.

Across the Consortium, many Board assets were reaching the end of their life and had weakened during the previous year's heavy rainfall. Grant-in-aid and local levy funding applications had been submitted to fund improvement works for the next six years. It was added that grant in aid funding may drop significantly following the six-year period which would potentially necessitate more focus being placed on special levy funding.

A general breakdown of regular tasks required of the Engineering Team was shared, to allow understanding of what they undertook on a daily basis. It was estimated that within Engineering, only 58% of officers' time was available to dedicate to project delivery. In addition to regular tasks, numerous unpredictable events such as flood events and telemetry system replacement for example, had reduced availability further. A full breakdown of Engineering projects for the next six years across the Consortium was provided, highlighting those which were urgent, upcoming and in progress.

In order to complete the projects included within the six-year time frame and avoid losing grant-in-aid and local levy funding, support from consultants would be required as there were not enough staff on hand to complete the projects in time.

Hiring consultants, compared to recruiting additional staff, would cost in the region of £370,000 per annum and still add to officers' time considerably, as their support and knowledge would be needed. As an alternative, recruiting additional staff would cost a comparative £230,000, bringing the total cost of the Engineering Team to £980,000. A breakdown of salaries for six proposed staff members was presented for information. The majority of funds for the new staff were already accounted for in project costings, leaving £42,000 to be divided as per the Consortium recharge ratios: £21,186 (Lindsey Marsh), £7,062 (Isle of Axholme), £9,416 (Trent Valley) and £5,136 (Doncaster East).

If the appointment of new staff was supported, the Engineering Staff would be divided into two teams: Design and Response/Delivery. This would increase output and focus, ensure that design costs were recovered from project costs and reduce Engineering Consortium recharges. The Design Team would undertake Outline Business Cases submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) for funding. A general Business Case took 150-160 hours of an officer's time to complete, whereas a more complex one took 150-250 hours. There were currently three individuals undertaking these submissions - two being staff members on the verge of retirement and one being a consultant. Cllr R. Allcock agreed that Outline Business Cases took a huge amount of time and effort, as witnessed during his time and experience in dealing with this through the Trent RFCC.

The Engineer listed the following as risks of not delivering the planned schedule of Engineering works on time:

- Risk to staff working with unsafe equipment/sites.

- Increased flood risk, maintenance, repair and manpower costs, due to asset failure.
- Failure to deliver the programme, resulting in loss of funding and loss of confidence in our accountability from EA, DEFRA and local council perspectives.
- Resources not being available in an emergency situation due to distraction from dealing with an asset failure.

Completion of the planned asset renewal and refurbishment programme would provide the following benefits:

- Board systems and assets would be working in a way that allowed for climate change throughout the life of the Station and which followed Eel Regulations.
- Any new pumps would provide efficiency and/or be carbon friendly, along with re-instatement of gravity outfalls.
- Lower maintenance costs.
- There was a high degree of funds currently available through grant-in-aid, which may be shortlived.
- Ability to plan pumping station and drain works concurrently, to be completed within a single project.
- Provision of resource availability for planned programmes.
- Commercial, technical and operational advantages from utilizing families of equipment and modular design.

The Chairman shared that the Consortium Committee had been content with the Engineer's proposal. Cllr Mrs J. Reed gave her thanks for the amount of work put into the presentation and added that she felt it was the only way forward. Cllr I. Bint queried what would happen in future, if we did not require the additional staff who had been hired. Officers reported that there was sufficient work after completion of the current six-year plan to fully utilise all staff and consideration could also be given to providing services to other bodies in the future, thus generating income Cllr R. Allcock gave his support and mentioned that the Trent RFCC was currently looking for applicants to come forward as it had considerable funds for granting to regional proposals.

Cllr Mrs J. Sanger asked whether the potential staff would have time limited contracts and Officers replied that they would hold the same type of contracts and rights as current staff. She also wondered if they would be available as soon as they were required, in line with the Board's time frame. The Engineer noted that no attempts to find suitable people had yet been made but that it would be worthwhile seeking applicants from the Trent Valley and Isle of Axholme regions as they were closer to large cities and would offer a greater selection of prospective employees. Torksey Pumping Station could be used as a potential office as it would mean minimal cost but the Board's current Newark and Epworth offices would also be considered. It was queried whether additional staff would add pressure to the Accounts department, but it was confirmed that there was currently enough capacity within this department and that it would not present any issues. The Corporate Services Manager shared responses received using the external voting forms, submitted by two Board members who had been unable to attend the meeting. Mr J. Fretwell and Cllr J. Briggs had given their support to the proposal.

RESOLVED

That the Board approve the appointment of six new members of staff to the Engineering Team, to support delivery of the six-year asset renewal and refurbishment programme. This was of course dependent on approval from the three other Boards within the Consortium.

6. REPLACEMENT VAN

Officers requested approval for the purchase of a van at a cost of £4,800. This vehicle would replace the van which had been recently written off and which the Board had received the sum of £3,700. Mr R. Mason asked whether vehicles would be provided for any of the six new members of staff. The Chief Executive replied that none would be bought, but that like all employees they would have access to the employee allowance for claiming back motor mileage when travelling to sites other than their office.

RESOLVED

That the Board proceed with the purchase of a replacement van, at a cost of £4,800.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

With regard to the Board challenging payment of the Environment Agency (EA) precept, a letter had been sent outlining the Board's concerns. Mr Paul Lockhart at the Nottinghamshire branch of the EA had been in contact and a meeting with Innes Thompson from ADA was to be held. DEFRA was going to present details surrounding this letter and its circumstances at the PAG meeting but had made it clear that they dealt with matters at a national level and not with individual cases; it was not considered appropriate for the board to attend the PAG meeting. The Chief Executive considered it likely that something would be heard by October.

Officers had met with EA representatives and walked along the River Idle with Mr M.A. Harris joining and sharing his knowledge of the region and the diminishing state of the river over the years.

Mr R. Mason felt that replacing the current pumps at West Stockwith with smaller pumps was not a better solution as this only meant they would have to run for longer to achieve the same result. The Chief Executive agreed with this, adding that water needed to be evacuated during flood events and removed from problem areas as quickly as possible. The pumps at West Stockwith were larger than those used at Keadby Pumping Station had run 24 hrs a day for several weeks during last year's flood event.

Cllr R. Alcock noted with concern that he had heard possibilities of the EA facing budget cuts, which was worrying considering the condition of the River Torne. The Chief Executive assured the Board that he was making his point strategically, as the condition of Main Rivers had a clear effect on Board's catchments. It was noted that Ms Emily Maile at the EA was currently assessing the Torne catchment. Cllr Allcock added that the Isle of Axholme Strategy Group had been brought to the forefront once again, with the involvement of Emily Maile and Nick LeMaire of the EA.

Cllr J. Reed left the meeting.

Mr M. Wagstaff brought attention to the silted up condition of the River Idle, behind Stonehill Farm. An excavator would be necessary to help clear this section as it was currently too silted up to allow a weedboat to pass through. This was the worse condition he had ever seen it in.

Mr M.A. Harris added his concerns regarding the Torne and Idle rivers. With the amount of new properties being built in the region, it was a necessity that storage areas for water be investigated. The River Trent did not always manage to take water away quickly enough and so temporary areas that could hold water and allow it to drain away at a slow rate would provide safety and assurance to residents and landowners.

Mr M. Pilkington made Officers aware of fly tipping in the Warping Drain, which would be removed by Operatives.

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CHAIRMAN