

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held at Beckingham Recreation Room on Tuesday, 23rd September 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Elected Members

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

Nominated by North Lincolnshire Council

* Cllr R. Allcock
* Mr N. Arrand
Cllrs T. Barker
* J. Briggs
Messrs R. Chapman
Cllr W. Eckhardt
Mr J. Lee
* Cllr D. Robinson
Mr J. Smith
Cllr Mrs L. Redfern
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*

The Chairman was sad to report the sudden death of the LMDB's surveyor. Members observed a minutes' silence.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs A. Barker, J. Coggon, Cllrs T. Barker, W. Eckhardt and Mrs L. Redfern.

The Chairman read a letter from Mr N. Culpin who had resigned from the Board. It was agreed that the Chief Executive should write to Mr Culpin thanking him for his valuable contribution to the Board over the last few years.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr R. Mason - item 9.
Cllr D. Robinson - items 7, 10, 12 and 13.
Cllr R. Allcock - item 15.
Cllr J. Briggs - item 15.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

3:1 Two items were notified: Bassetlaw Scrutiny Committee Report and Low Burnham water retention structure.

3:2 The Chairman reported that the current Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), Mrs J. Venables, had given notice that she would be leaving the post on 31st March 2015. The ADA Board had commenced the process to appoint a successor.

4. BOARD MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24th June 2014 be confirmed as a correct record subject to it being noted that Mr R. Mason had attended the meeting.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 9:1:3, Page 195 - Bewcarrs Pumping Station

In response to Mr R.H. Brown, the Engineer reported that the Environment Agency had put in a bid for grant aid funding of £300,000 to refurbish the Warping Drain outfall in 2016/17. He did not have the full details but understood this might include replacing the flap valves and sluices and the installation of fish and eel passes.

The Engineer agreed to provide more details as they became available.

RECEIVED

6. DRAINAGE RATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

6:1 Rate Collection

The Director of Finance reported that drainage rates and special levies outstanding at 8th September 2014 totalled £467,305.90.

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6:2 Special Levy Transfers

As agricultural land within the Board's area was developed, transfers were made from agricultural rates annual assessable values to the special levy annual assessable value. The Director of Finance confirmed that the method for transferring value was by using the average value per acre as determined at the 1992 revaluation; £580.71 per acre.

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7. FINANCE

7:1 Cash Reserves and Investments

The Director of Finance reported a balance of £1,035,235.35 which was currently invested in four accounts. It was noted that interest rates continued to fall.

Loans totalling £147,854.13 remained outstanding with the Public Works Loan Board and £25,537 with Case New Holland in respect of hire purchase for the tractor.

RESOLVED

That cash balances and borrowings be noted.

7:2 Accounts for the period up to 31st August 2014

The Director of Finance presented a report detailing a net expenditure to date of £613,241 which was £63,443 favourable to budget. This was largely due to earlier rate collection and savings made to date on drain maintenance, capital works and administration costs. Members were pleased to note that the generally quiet start to the year had allowed the completion of some of the major capital projects in the year to date.

RESOLVED

That the Board's financial position be noted.

7:3 Forecast for the Year Ended 31st March 2015

The Director of Finance forecast a net deficit of £749,822 at the end of the year which was £46,665 favourable to budget; this included £712,000 of accruals brought forward for completion of the 2013/14 capital works programme.

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7:4 Payment Schedule

The attached schedule detailing payments over £500 made since the last Board meeting was circulated for information. The amounts shown were inclusive of V.A.T.

It was noted that Consortium recharges now included costs for the Engineering Manager who was also undertaking the role of Works Supervisor; the former Works Supervisor's salary had previously been paid directly by the Board.

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7:5 Fixed Asset Purchases

The Director of Finance reported that a new Energreen Herder flail had been purchased at a cost of £15,905.

RECEIVED

7:6 Final Accounts

The Director of Finance reported that the external Auditor's unqualified report had been received. The Board discussed and noted the Auditor's report and other matters raised. The Board agreed to amend its financial regulations to incorporate the Auditor's recommendation regarding expenditure decisions.

RECEIVED

8. OPERATIONS REPORT

The attached report detailing works up to 31st August 2014 was presented.

It was noted that some of the summer maintenance works in the West Axholme and West Butterwick areas had been incorrectly allocated; these would be adjusted and an update presented to the next meeting. In response to Cllr Mrs H. Brand, the Director of Operations

confirmed that work had now commenced in the Everton area; the work had been delayed until the crops were cleared.

Both Mr R.H. Brown and Mr R. Mason expressed surprise that weeds had re-colonised the Paupers Drain channel so soon after the major cleansing and improvement works. The Director of Operations and Engineering Manager agreed that this was unusual and explained that a further weedcut was planned. Mr R.H. Brown enquired if chemical treatments were a possible alternative. The Chief Executive explained that the Association of Drainage Authorities and Lincolnshire Internal Drainage Boards were sponsoring research to seek clarification of new chemicals as most of the chemicals formerly approved for waterway use had been withdrawn.

The R. Mason requested that levels of siltation either side of Common Carr Bridge be checked and removed if necessary. The Engineer confirmed that this would be done in conjunction with the planned bridge reconstruction starting late Autumn 2014.

In response to a question about Environment Agency (EA) maintenance of main rivers during the summer 2014, it was confirmed that all the works planned had or would be completed and financed by the EA. Two sections of main river, Warping Drain/Snow Sewer and River Idle (upstream Retford to A1) would be financed by the Board as agreed; the Director of Operations to organise.

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9. ASSET RENEWAL AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS

9:1 Crowle Pumped Area

The Engineer presented the attached plan and gave an overview of the Scheme.

9:1:1 Paupers Drain Improvements Downstream and Upstream Channel Works

Channel improvement works from Paupers Pumping Station to the Wrays Drain Urban pipe outfall were complete and spreading of spoil had commenced.

The Engineer reported that expenditure to date was £334,709 against a budget of £456,300 with an overspend of £7,000 predicted. This took into account the refund of tidal surge damage which was addressed within the drain works contract undertaken by M. Gould (Scunthorpe) Limited and the cost of permanent land loss of an area of land where mudstone rock had been excavated and deposited.

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9:1:2 Paupers Bridge No. 12 (next to Common Carrs Drain Outfall)

Mr R. Mason declared an interest.

In November 2013, the Board had agreed that the replacement of Bridge No. 12 should be funded using savings of £24,000 from the Eastoft Main Parish Bridge. Quotations had, therefore, been sought for the replacement of Bridge No. 12 from the contractor already undertaking the scheme and also from the Board's Direct Labour Organisation. The Engineer reported that due to health and safety concerns regarding the location of overhead lines and also erosion of the channel, in addition to this, they had been asked to quote for 33 metres of channel lining works from Bridge No. 12 past the electric pole.

	Contractor	Direct Labour Organisation
Bridge No. 12 Replacement	£54,900 <i>corrugated steel pipe</i>	£42,500 <i>plastic twinwall pipe</i>
Channel Lining	£22,000	£17,380
Total	£76,900	£59,880

The Contractor had also quoted for a similar box culvert which would cost an additional £85,000.

The Engineer reported that should the Direct Labour Organisation's quotation be accepted, this would leave a shortfall of £35,880 in the budget, however, as the works were a necessary part of the scheme, application could be made to the Environment Agency for approval as a variation giving grant funding of £26,347 from the reserved contingency and thereby reducing the Board's contribution to £9,533. The Board was asked to note that £50,000 of the reserved contingency (£190,000) had already been set against the Paupers Drain channel improvement works above, leaving £140,000 in the fund.

In response to a question, Officers reported that the Board owned 22 bridges across its area.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the replacement of Bridge No. 12 and the channel lining be submitted for grant funding as a variation of the Crowle Scheme.
- (b) That the quotation submitted by the Board's Direct Labour Organisation for the replacement of Bridge No. 12 be accepted.
- (c) That the channel lining works be re-designed to keep within the existing budget and that the Board's Direct Labour Organisation undertake the work.

9:1:3 Bewcarrs Pumping Station

The Engineer reported that planned delivery of this element of the Crowle Scheme had been extended whilst discussions were held with the Environment Agency regarding the requirements to meet the Eel Regulations. The outcome of these discussions would affect what pumping arrangements were planned for the station. The matter was being looked at in conjunction with Paupers Pumping Station, Paupers Sluice and Keadby Warping Drain Sluice.

Officers were confident that mobile pumping equipment would be sufficient to cope with the flows in the short term should a heavy rainfall event occur.

RECEIVED

9:1:4 Godnow Pumping Station

The possibility of using spoil from the Paupers Drain improvements to raise the North Soke Dyke banks was being investigated and the Engineer reported that, if suitable, this would realise savings both in the procurement of new material and in the disposal of the Paupers Drain material.

RECEIVED

9:1:5 Common Carrs Pumping Station

It was noted that the initial modelling had suggested a higher pumping capacity was required at the station and further modelling would, therefore, be undertaken to assess the implication of a larger pump. Officers reported that the data collected from the recently installed telemetry system was proving helpful for the modelling.

RECEIVED

9:2 Medium Term Plan

The Board's Officers had been consulted on a draft indicative Medium Term Plan for FDGiA covering the next six years.

The Chief Executive and Engineer reported that Officers had had first sight of the likely allocations to be announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. Due to the sensitivity of this, the information available was restricted. The scrutiny that was undertaken had highlighted a number of anomalies in funding for the Board's projects, however, representations made had seen the rectification of all issues.

Cllr R. Allcock confirmed that the process undertaken and data used was not without flaws but he was confident that following the Board's Officers' inputs and discussions at the recent Flood and Coastal Committee meeting, the programme (as it affected the Board) was now reinstated as planned.

RECEIVED

9:3 Telemetry System

Officers reported that the telemetry project continued on schedule and on budget with the installation of the final site at Godnow Pumping Station underway. CCTV installation, minor fixes, system configuration and training was planned to take place over the next three months and the system would be fully live in January 2015.

RECEIVED

9:4 Tidal Surge Damage

The Board had received 100% Flood Defence Grant in Aid to fully refund the tidal surge damage that occurred in December 2013. The total amount received was £71,692 of which £59,000 had been assigned to the Paupers Drain works.

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9:5 Railway Line

Cllr Mrs H. Brand enquired whether the Board had been consulted on the proposed major works along the East Coast and Great Northern and Great Eastern joint railway lines and whether there were any implications for the Board.

The Engineer confirmed that the Board was being consulted on the East Coast main line level crossings from Doncaster to Newark and he would make enquires to ascertain what other works were planned and whether these would affect the Board.

RECEIVED

10. PROPOSED DEPOT MOVE

The Board's Engineering Manager had undertaken a review of the potential sites at Owston Ferry and Epworth and also considered the possibility of increasing the existing site at Derrythorpe to meet the needs of the Boards operational and support staffs. The plans of the proposed building were also being reviewed and cost savings considered.

The Chief Executive explained that the Epworth site required junction improvements, stoning and fencing which would add substantial costs to the build whereas this would not be necessary at the Owston Ferry Site.

Regarding the possibility of extending the existing depot at Derrythorpe, excluding the purchase of the additional land, costs were estimated at between £20,000 and £25,000 for the formation of a new access and £20,000 for the new yard area plus the cost of the new building (although the proposed building footprint could be reduced if the existing depot building was retained). However, it was noted that £70,000 would be removed from the budget as the depot would not be sold. Additionally, there were potential problems with overhead lines which were situated between the existing yard and the area of land which would need to be purchased.

The Chief Executive reported that the most affordable option appeared to be the Owston Ferry site but a paper detailing all the options and the costs would be presented to a future meeting for consideration.

RECEIVED

11. SALE OF DRAIN HEAD HOUSE

As requested the Chief Executive reported that he had taken advice regarding the sale of Drain Head House at Keadby and negotiated the sale with the existing tenant.

The property had been valued at £70,000 (taking into account its declining condition) in October 2012 and the valuer had advised that this valuation still stood. Following a discussion with the Chairman a second valuation had been sought which was in line with the original received in 2012.

The current tenant (a previous employee of the Board) had indicated that he still wished to purchase the property and, following advice received from the valuers, it was agreed that a reduction of 10% should be given to the current tenant provided he could complete the sale before 28th November 2014. This decision was based on the following:

- (a) The tenant had occupied the property for over 20 years (although he was on an assured shorthold tenancy and therefore had no security of tenure).
- (b) Should the Board wish to sell the property on the open market, notice would have to be given to the tenant, leaving the property empty.
- (c) An empty unheated property would deteriorate further (particularly during the winter) and there was no guarantee how long a sale would take. There would be

a very real risk that the vacant property would be a target for vandalism with the attendant costs for repair to be borne by the Board.

- (d) Currently a rental income was being received (should the existing tenant purchase the property, he would continue to pay this until completion of the sale); there would be no rental income whilst the property was empty and the Board may still be liable for some outgoings.
- (e) If the property was placed on the open market, estate agents' fees would be payable. Selling by auction was considered but, although a reserve price could be fixed, it would be difficult to guarantee what price would be obtained.
- (f) If the Board retained the property, renovation and repair including refurbishment of the fabric, fittings and services would be required in the very near future.

The Chief Executive reported that the decision to offer the property for sale to the tenant for £63,000 had been made following the approval of members of the Finance Committee. Should the sale not be completed within the agreed timescale, consideration would be given to placing the property on the open market or selling by auction.

The Vice-Chairman stated that the sale of the property must be agreed before the end of November as this would impact on the decision for the new depot/offices.

RESOLVED

That the actions taken by the Chief Executive be approved.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The following update on environmental matters was given by the Engineer:

12:1 River Idle Management Partnership - De-silting

The Environment Agency was expecting funding to be allocated for a silt survey and hoped to make a formal announcement shortly.

RECEIVED

12:2 Isle of Axholme and Hatfield Chase Landscape Partnership

This was the new name for the "Humberhead Levels Landscape Partnership: Isles, Moors and Meadows" scheme, which had an allocated budget of £1,913,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Project development was taking place and "Expression of Interest" forms were available for potential projects.

The Board's Environmental Officer had accepted an invitation to sit on the Project Steering Group. Environmental and Heritage Improvement Projects, some of which may have impact on the water environment, would be developed over the next few months.

RECEIVED

12:3 Barn Owl Nest Box Monitoring

Twenty two barn owl and nine kestrel chicks were present when the nest boxes were inspected in June and the chicks had identification rings applied. This suggested an exceptional year with second barn owl broods likely.

RECEIVED

12:4 Eel Regulations 2009

The Environment Agency had recently issued additional documentation to be completed for this work. Details of the Cost Benefit Calculation had also been provided and although this was the same calculation used for FDGIA funding, for eel assessments it was not used in the same way; discussions to resolve this iniquity were ongoing.

RECEIVED

12:5 Water Voles - Class Licensing

The proposed class license included a requirement for the initial cutting of vegetation to be completed during the period 15th February to 15th April prior to reforming works the following autumn. IDB Ecologists, in reviewing the guidance had suggested two periods for the initial cut:

- (a) By 31st March (in exceptional circumstances by 15th April).
- (b) Mid-September till the beginning of October (in exceptional circumstances 1st September - 15th November).

These recommendations had been forwarded to the Association of Drainage Authorities' Technical and Environmental Committee for consideration and to Natural England. If approved, this would mean that the Board would no longer have to apply for a licence as the current working practices already fitted these timescales.

RECEIVED

13. POLICY DOCUMENTS

13:1 Flexible Working

The Chief Executive reported that as from 30th June 2014 all employees had a statutory right to request flexible working after 26 weeks service. To comply with these changes, a Flexible Working Policy had been prepared based on guidance issued by the Board's solicitor and detailing the way in which any request would be dealt with.

RESOLVED

That the attached Flexible Working Policy be approved.

13:2 Travel Policy

The Director of Finance had prepared a travel Policy for Consortium employees to clarify when mileage would be paid. The amount payable was currently 65p per mile

for casual users and 45p per mile for essential users (in line with the Inland Revenue rates).

RESOLVED

That the attached Travel Policy be approved.

13:3 Long Service Awards

The Chief Executive reported that LMDB had a policy which applied to all employees of the Board (and its predecessor Boards) who had completed 21 and 35 years' continuous service. This had been set up to show appreciation to long and loyal serving employees. The awards were £100 for 21 years and £200 for 35 years and took the form of either a gift to that value or a monetary award (less tax and NI). These arrangements complied with HM Revenue and Customs guidance.

Members were asked to consider whether they wished to adopt a similar arrangement for Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board employees.

RESOLVED

That a Long Service Award Policy be prepared for employees completing 21 and 35 years' continuous service as detailed above.

14. EXTERNAL MEETINGS

14:1 Association of Drainage Authorities Annual Conference

The Chief Executive reported that the Association of Drainage Authorities Annual Conference would be held on Wednesday, 12th November 2014 in London. The cost would be £109 per person plus rail fares.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman represent the Board at the ADA Conference.

14:2 Annual Environment Agency (EA)/Internal Drainage Board (IDB) Liaison Meeting

Officers reported that the annual EA/IDB liaison meeting would take place on Wednesday, 19th November 2014 at the Newark Showground from 9.30 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. to include a short meeting of the ADA Trent Branch. There would be no cost to the Board.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Cllr R. Allcock and Mr K. Durdy attend to represent the Board.

14:3 Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) Farming with Nature

An invitation had been received from the GLNP to a Conference at Lincoln on 6th November entitled 'exploring innovations in agricultural technologies and practices that are sympathetic to nature and help to conserve natural biological processes whilst

making a positive impact on the bottom line for farm business in Greater Lincolnshire'. There would be no cost to the Board.

The Board's Environmental Officer would be attending in a representational role and the invitation was also extended to Board members although places were limited.

Mr R. Mason expressed an interest in attending and Mr S. White requested some feedback from the Conference.

RECEIVED

15. DELEGATED MATTERS - PLANNING, BYELAWS AND SUPERVISORY ROLE

15:1 Byelaw Applications

The following Byelaw Consents had been issued under delegated authority since the last Board meeting:

IANNB012-2014 Construction of surface water outfall into the left bank of the Board maintained Main Drain at national grid reference SK 66812 87532 in the parish of Ranskill.

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15:2 Section 23 Applications

There had been no applications for consent under Section 23 since the last Board meeting.

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15:3 Planning Applications

The Board's officers had commented on two planning applications since the last Board meeting.

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16. RIVER TRENT CATCHMENT FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ISLE OF AXHOLME STRATEGY

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Isle of Axholme Strategy had now been signed off by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Cllr R. Allcock reported that he had received a letter from DEFRA detailing the way forward for the Strategy and confirmed that the Advisory Group would be meeting shortly to take this forward. He stated that it was essential to find out what funds would be available from the Government and how the work would be funded. This would be considered by the Advisory Group who would also be investigating whether there were cheaper alternatives for carrying out some of the works.

In response to the Chairman, Cllr Allcock stated that work on some of the main rivers seemed to be progressing outside the strategy, e.g. stoning works on the River Trent and also some works at West Stockwith and Keadby PS, although some of this work was being undertaken to repair damage caused by the tidal surge and other works that had in the past been neglected.

RECEIVED

17. HEALTH AND SAFETY

17:1 Legislation

There was no new or amended legislation that would affect the Board.

RECEIVED

17:2 Incidents

The Chief Executive reported on four incidents that had occurred since the last Board meeting and a further five incidents across the Consortium. He stated that investigations had been undertaken into all the incidents and a memo issued to the Direct Labour Organisations to raise awareness. The Director of Operations confirmed that he was satisfied that the Board had the correct procedures and safe systems of work in place.

Despite this, overall, Officers confirmed that there was a very positive health and safety culture within the organisation.

RECEIVED

17:3 Issues

No new issues had been raised since the last Board meeting. Officers were undertaking a review of outstanding issues to ensure that these were all cleared.

RECEIVED

17:4 Meetings

The next Health and Safety Committee meeting scheduled for 29th September 2014 would consider the new Health and Safety Policy.

New Point of Work Risk Assessment forms had been issued to the DLO and general risk assessments for weedcutting and flailing operations had been drafted and circulated to Supervisors for comment. Once approved, these would be issued to all operatives. The Director of Operations reported that operatives were embracing all the changes and working to keep each other safe.

RECEIVED

18. BASSETLAW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At the request of Bassetlaw District Council, the Engineer had prepared a report on the Board's activity within the Council's area. He had also offered to give a presentation should this be required.

RECEIVED

19. LOW BURNHAM WATER RETENTION STRUCTURE

The Chairman reported that the Scheme undertaken by the Board to alleviate flooding in the village of Low Burnham had proved very successful, however, the water retention area was now becoming very overgrown and required some attention. He asked Officers to inspect the area to ascertain what work was required.

Cllr R. Allcock reported that this had been a joint scheme undertaken in conjunction with North Lincolnshire Council and suggested that the Board's Officers contact the Council to discuss this once the inspection had been carried out.

RESOLVED

That the Engineer inspect the water retention area at Low Burnham, discuss with North Lincolnshire Council and report back to the Board.

CHAIRMAN