

ISLE OF AXHOLME AND NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held at Beckingham Recreation Room, on Tuesday, 29th January 2013 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
- * G.T. Wagstaff
- * S. White

Nominated by North Lincolnshire Council

- * Messrs R. Allcock
- * N. Arrand
- * T. Barker
- * J. Briggs
- * N. Culpin
- * W. Eckhardt
- * D. Harrison
- * J. Lee
- * D. Robinson
- * J. Smith

Mrs L. Redfern

Nominated by Bassetlaw District Council

- * Mesdames H. Brand
- * J.M. Sanger

* *Present*

- * Messrs A. McGill (Chief Executive)
- * D.J. Sisson (Engineer)
- * M. Mitchell (Director of Technical Services)
- * R.P. Mitchell (Director of Operations)
- * M.D. Pilkington (Works Supervisor)
- * S. Thackray (Director of Finance)

* *In attendance*

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs R. Allcock, T. Barker, R.H. Brown, D. Robinson and Mrs L. Redfern.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were noted:

Messrs M.A. Harris and A. Barker Agenda Item 7 (Payment Schedule).

Mr R. Mason - Agenda Item 15 (Delegated Matters - Planning Application).

3. NOTICE OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chief Executive reported that he had one staffing matter to discuss under any other business.

4. BOARD MINUTES (Pages 78 to 96)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 27th November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5:1 Minute 7:1, Page 79 - Pipe Under the A161

The Engineer confirmed that the pipe had been removed and would be reinstated shortly.

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5:2 Minute 12, Page 84 - Payment Schedule

On behalf of North Lincolnshire Council, Mr D. Harrison asked for an invoice for any outstanding costs in relation to the Boltgate Scheme to be forwarded for payment before the end of the financial year.

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5:3 Minute 27, Page 96 - Complaint

Mrs H. Brand reported that she had been contacted by Mr Trotman who had suggested that members would be personally liable. Although she did not believe this to be the case, Mrs Brand asked for clarification.

The Chief Executive reiterated resolution (b) made by the Board at the last meeting "That should members have any issues, concerns or matters they wished to discuss or have noted in these matters that they raise them directly with the Board's solicitor, Mr Jonathan Stork at Wilkin Chapman Epton Blades on 01522 512345 or, should they wish, forward them to him through the Chief Executive".

The Chief Executive stated that he would pass this information to Wilkin Chapman Epton Blades. Members were reminded to contact either the Chief Executive or the solicitor immediately if they received any further contact regarding this matter.

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6. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Chief Executive circulated the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 12th December 2012. Mr W. Eckhardt confirmed that these were a correct record of the meeting; this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

It was proposed by Mrs J.M. Sanger, seconded by Mr N. Arrand and agreed unanimously that the recommendations made by the Committee be adopted by the Board.

A full report on the discussion at the meeting is recorded on Pink Paper.

RESOLVED

that the recommendations made by the Standards Committee be adopted by the Board.

7. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Director of Finance presented the attached schedule detailing payments made since the last Board meeting totalling £197,298.55.

RESOLVED

That the attached Schedule be approved.

8. DRAINAGE RATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

The Chief Executive reported that drainage rates collected at 15th January 2013 totalled £361,952.80 (95.8%); the special levies had been received in full.

It was agreed that a report would be presented to the next meeting on whether there were any arrears still outstanding from 2011/12.

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9. FINANCE

The Director of Finance presented the attached report.

Regarding investments, the Director of Finance reported that deposit rates continued to fall. A new account would be opened with Nat West at an interest rate of 1.5% and money would be transferred from the Beverley Building Society account to spread the risk to the Board.

At the time of the report, it was expected that costs for February and March would be average, however, with the continued heavy rainfall the Director of Finance stated that the forecast for 2012/13 would be higher than stated. It was noted that the pumping hours recorded at Paupers Pumping Station for December had been equal to the amount for a whole year.

The Director of Finance confirmed that expenditure for Pumping Stations included electricity, diesel, insurance, labour, all repairs, telemetry support, transformer and weedscreen maintenance. The Chief Executive stated that a detailed breakdown of these costs was regularly presented to the Finance Committee for consideration but asked members to let him know if they wished to have sight of a copy. Mr N. Culpin stated that it was essential that the pumping stations were kept in good order and that the Board must regularly compare the running costs/age of the station etc., eg if the running costs were too high it may be more cost effective to bring refurbishment forward.

In response to Mr P. Cornish, the Director of Finance confirmed that tenders were sought for electricity supply through a broker.

It was noted that the £14,000 referred to under Item 3 (Support Services) was not for redundancy but for early retirement costs.

RESOLVED

That the Board's financial position be noted.

10. ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 1ST APRIL 2013 TO 31ST MARCH 2014

Officers presented estimates of income and expenditure 2013/14 based on a zero rate and special levy increase. This included major capital investment schemes targeting areas that had been subject to flooding in 2012 and provided an enhanced maintenance programme to ensure strategic watercourses were maintained early in the year to prevent flooding and twice if required. Provision had also been made for construction of a new depot and office adjacent to the Environment Agency at Owston Ferry as previously approved by the Board. The cost of the new depot and office would be offset by savings from rental of the office at Epworth and sale of two other properties owned by the Board. Co-location with the Environment Agency would also facilitate partnership working. The major projects in the year would be funded by PWLB loans.

The budget and latest estimate had been prepared on the following assumptions:

Inflation The Bank of England forecast inflation to fall to around their 2% target in 2013.

Tax Increases and Pension The Board would continue to be impacted by indirect tax increases in fuel duties and National Insurance contributions and inflationary pressures on fuel and other costs. From April 2014 overtime would become a pensionable item.

Borrowing The budget includes PWLB loan funding over 10 years of £310k for the Crowle Pumped Area (CPA) Improvements and £210k over 10 years for the New Build Depot/office. These loans would increase the Board's borrowings to £650k at 31/3/14, up from £205k at 31/3/12. The Board's medium term plan shows continued significant Capital investments in flood defence projects in 2014/15 and beyond. These projects, if approved by the Board, would make it very likely that increases in the rate would be required from 2014/15 onwards.

A proposed rate of 11.5p/£ would provide rates and levy income of £989k and result in a reduction in balances of £68k, giving a forecast cash balance at 31st March 2014 of £484k (46% of budgeted net expenditure). It was noted that this deficit was due to the use of balances, built up in past years, to fund capital works.

The 2013/14 budget allowed for net expenditure of £1.058m; £453k lower than the 2012/13 budget which included Capital works accrued from 2011/12.

The main expenditures by heading were presented as follows:

Income Deposit interest income is expected to reduce reflecting reducing bank balances and interest rates.

Pumping Stations An increase of £26k had been allowed to reflect increasing electricity costs and annual electrical, pump and weedscreen inspections to satisfy the Electricity at Work Act and insurance requirements. This also included maintenance costs for the telemetry system. The annual inspections and the telemetry should result in earlier knowledge of potential plant failure and save the Board from future large repair costs.

Drain Maintenance This allowed for annual weedcutting of all Board maintained watercourses and an increase of £29k had been made for double cutting of strategic ordinary watercourses that protect high risk and urban areas.

Capital Schemes (Net of Grant and Loan) Gross expenditure of £831k had been allowed for capital works. Two major projects were budgeted for PWLB funding: Crowle Pumped Area (CPA) upgrades and Paupers Drain Channel Improvements £310k over ten years, and the depot and offices £347k gross (£138k capital sales, and £210k over ten years). The cost of all the other projects would be met from revenue funding. An allowance had also been made for a full reforming programme and a bridge replacement in the Crowle area.

Depot Costs No increase had been made compared to last year's budget.

Net Plant Purchases, HP repayments and Running costs This allowed for the replacement of a 2005 pickup which had exceeded the miles in the Board's replacement policy and the purchase of a new tracked excavator and low loader trailer (required for work on Snow Sewer) with 50% deposit and the remainder on HP.

Support Services Provision had been made for a 1.0% pay increase in line with the government guidance on public sector pay and £2k had been allowed for the purchase of a computer server for the Epworth office. Budgeted support service costs represent 19% of the reduced net expenditure.

DLO Costs A small increase of £2k had been allowed to reflect inflationary increases.

Environment Agency (EA) Precept The EA was expected to set an unchanged precept for 2013/14, this was paid net of the highland water contribution.

PWLB Loan Repayments The PWLB repayments on existing loans were supplemented by the repayments on the new scheme loans detailed above.

The Chief Executive stated that because of the austere financial climate, officers had put together a set of estimates based on no rate increase. If the rate was retained at the same level for 2013/14 it would mean that an increase was inevitable next year if the Board wished to continue with the planned capital works programme.

Mr R. Mason queried the cost of the new depot and offices. The Director of Finance stated that savings in rent from the Epworth office and the same from two properties owned by the Board would offset the cost and there was a sound business case to proceed with the build. The case for building a new depot and offices had been discussed in detail and agreed by the Board in January and March 2012, however, it was agreed that the Chief Executive would present the case to the next meeting for the benefit of those members who were not on the Board at that time.

Mr R. Mason reported that work was required on the pumps at Kelfield and South Street.

The Chief Executive stated that confirmation had been received from the Environment Agency (EA) that the Board would be taking over maintenance of Snow Sewer. In response to Mr R. Mason, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Board would recharge the cost of the work to the EA. The Chairman reported that Snow Sewer had overtopped again this year and water was also seeping through the banks. He stated that this was inevitable as work had not been undertaken for some 35 years and a lot of damage had been caused to the

banks by badgers and rabbits. Maintenance of this watercourse would benefit the villages of Haxey and Westwoodside as well as the Board's own systems. The Board would also be undertaking work on the North Soke for the EA. The Chairman stated that the Board must be well placed to undertake more work for the EA in the future and must continue to liaise with them. He stated that the Board's own systems must be maintained to at least the current standard and that the Board must be able to act fast as well as doing a good job, should more work be forthcoming from the EA. The Chairman stated that it was essential to protect the area from the risk of flooding and with this in mind, recommended that the Board should increase the rate by 1p.

Regarding the new depot, the Vice-Chairman agreed that the cost must be monitored but stated that the Board was currently paying £25,000 a year to rent an office. He stated that the Board had already invested time and money in this and had considered and agreed the business case to proceed. He suggested that the Board proceed and final costs could then be obtained and presented to the Board.

In response to Mr G.R.J. Bramhill, the Director of Finance stated that if the Board did not agree to a small increase in the rate this year, a 1p increase would be required every year for the next four years and this would still reduce the balances. He further stated that this could be very serious for the Board if there was another year with continued heavy rainfall like 2012. When the Boards amalgamated the predicted rate by 2014 was 14p. The Director of Finance confirmed that 1p was equivalent to £86,000.

Mr J. Coggon arrived.

Mr P. Cornish reported that the National Farmers' Union had formed a Committee to sit with the EA to discuss flooding issues and they were looking for people to become involved. He suggested that it would be a good idea for the Board to become involved in this Forum. Mr Cornish enquired what progress had been made with contacting the Secretary of State and stated that this would be a good time to make an approach as people seemed more likely to listen.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that a small annual increase in the rate was preferable to retaining the rate and then having a large increase next year. The Chairman agreed, stating that the Board had managed to hold the rate for four years.

It was proposed by Mr P. Bradwell and seconded by Mr N. Culpin that the attached estimates of income and expenditure be approved and that the Board levy a rate of 12.5p.

An amendment was proposed by Mr P. Cornish and seconded by Mr G.T. Wagstaff that the Board levy a rate of 12p.

A vote was taken on the amendment and this was lost.

A vote was taken on the proposal and this was carried, with only two votes against.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the attached estimates of expenditure for the year commencing 1st April 2013 be approved in the total sum of £1,057,765.
- (b) That the amounts to be raised by means of drainage rates in respect of agricultural land and buildings, special levies on the local charging

authorities and estimates of the amount from balances, for the year commencing 1st April 2013 be as follows:

- (i) by drainage rates levied in respect of agricultural land and buildings - £405,450,
 - (ii) by special levy on North Lincolnshire Council - £575,687,
 - (iii) by special levy on Bassetlaw District Council - £85,484,
 - (iv) by special levy on East Riding of Yorkshire Council - £7,248,
 - (v) by special levy on Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council - £1,281, and
 - (vi) by addition to balances - £17,385.
- (c) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2013 on North Lincolnshire Council be made and sealed in the sum of £575,687.
- (d) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2013 on Bassetlaw District Council be made and sealed in the sum of £85,484.
- (e) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2013 on East Riding of Yorkshire Council be made and sealed in the sum of £7,248.
- (f) That the special levy for the financial year commencing 1st April 2013 on Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council be made and sealed in the sum of £1,281.
- (g) That the statutory record of levies be made up.
- (h) That the drainage rate for the financial year commencing 1st April 2013 be made and sealed in the total sum of 12.50 pence in the pound.

11. OPERATIONS REPORT

The Works Supervisor presented the attached report for information.

It was reported that the owl box at Cow Lane had fallen off the pole and the one at Heckdyke was accessible to cats and would require relocating.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the attached report be noted.
- (b) That the Board's Environmental Officer conduct a review of all owl boxes in the Board's area.

12. ASSET RENEWAL AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS

12:1 Althorpe Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment

Refurbishment of the two pumps at Althorpe was complete. The pumps had been in regular use over the last few weeks with no problems. Costs would be presented to the next Board meeting.

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12:2 Wiseton Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment

Refurbishment of the pumps at Wiseton was also complete. Again, these pumps had been in regular use over the last few weeks with no problems. Costs would be presented to the next Board meeting.

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12:3 Low Burnham Flood Alleviation Scheme

The stockpiled spoil would be spread as soon as weather/ground conditions allowed. The Engineer stated that this work may have to be carried out in stages due to the wetness of the spoil.

RECEIVED

12:4 Whitgift Outfall Health and Safety Works

Four companies had been invited to tender for the works but only two were received: £10,575.00 and £12,783.00.

The lowest tender was accepted and works had commenced and were progressing well.

RECEIVED

12:5 Flood Investigations

The Engineer reported that the recent heavy rainfall in November and December 2012 had caused a number of problems which were being investigated. The Board's Improvement Strategy had been revised to take these into account. The investigations included:

Operational resilience at Kelfield, Black Dyke and South Street Pumping Stations
Crowle Pumped Area Improvements
Operational resilience - telemetry
Parklands Flood Relief Scheme
Pumping Plant Refurbishment and Replacement Strategy

Mr D. Harrison reported that flooding to properties in West Butterwick had occurred in 2007 and repeated incidents had occurred since. He confirmed that North Lincolnshire Council would, therefore, like to progress the Parklands Flood Relief Scheme with the Board, to reduce the likelihood of this happening in the future.

RECEIVED

12:6 Crowle Area Improvement Strategy

Regarding the Crowle Scheme, the Engineer reported that proposals for the scheme had been reviewed following the heavy rainfall in July and November 2012. He referred to the attached plan showing the proposed works (it was noted that the dates required amending). The new proposals allowed for the refurbishment of Paupers and Bewcarrs Pumping Stations. The improvements to watercourses would not reduce flooding completely and there would still be problems in the Keadby area that would need to be addressed. Results from the modelling should be available in March 2013 and a further report would be presented at that time.

Mr G.R.J. Bramhill enquired whether the section from the Warping Drain to Bewcarrs Pumping Station would be cleaned out. The Engineer confirmed that work was required to improve the conveyance of the water and he would be applying for the appropriate licences from the environmental authorities. He further reported that the channel should flush itself once it was improved as there was a good scour. Mr R. Mason stated that the water level in Crowle had dropped considerably within six hours when the mobile Betsy pump had been used at Bewcarrs during the recent heavy rainfall.

RECEIVED

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

The Chief Executive and Engineer had attended a meeting with the Environment Agency to discuss how to proceed with identifying projects for the next five years. It had been agreed at the meeting that the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee would oversee the process but there would also be a stakeholder group as well as delivery groups to consider the individual works.

At the meeting the process of bidding for grant aid for the works was also discussed. Mr D. Harrison reported that the work must not be done piecemeal to ensure the full benefit for the area.

The meeting had seemed amenable to the possibility of the Board undertaking more work, however, the means of funding was yet unclear.

The Chief Executive reported that in Lincolnshire a programme of works for the whole area had been completed and he had suggested that this process be followed for the Isle of Axholme Strategy. The Engineer stated that a composite works schedule would also involve works planned by the Lead Local Authority and District Councils.

It was noted that after the meeting Mr J. Pygott would give a presentation on the Isle of Axholme Strategy.

RECEIVED

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

There were no matters to report.

15. DELEGATED MATTERS - PLANNING, BYELAWS AND SUPERVISORY ROLE

15:1 Byelaw Applications

Byelaw consent had been granted under delegated authority for the de-watering of 34 wind turbine bases into the Board's system from Keadby windfarm.

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15:2 Section 23 Applications

No consents had been issued since the last Board meeting.

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15:3 Planning Applications

Officers had consulted on nine planning applications since the last meeting and appropriate observations had been made by officers under delegated authority. No objections had been raised.

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16. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The Engineer presented the following update:

16:1 Humberhead Levels Partnership

The Humberhead Levels Partnership while delivering the work funded by the three year Nature Improvement Area scheme was also preparing a bid for Landscape Partnership funding. This funding was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund for areas of countryside with distinctive landscape character.

The Partnership's proposal included a large part of the Board's district. If the bid progressed through to the second stage, detailed development of projects would be required and the Board would be able to influence this stage of the application and submit appropriate projects.

RECEIVED

16:2 Local Wildlife Sites

In 2009/10 the Board had facilitated access for surveys of maintained watercourses and several Board maintained watercourses were subsequently designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

A report assessing these watercourse had recently been published by the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union, Transactions Volume 28 Part 1. The report noted "*Survey data*

strongly suggest that botanical richness is greatest in wide and intensively managed drains, rivers and canal ... Thus, as one proceeds downstream, most watercourses become wider, hold more water, are more likely to be adequately managed, and exhibit an increase in botanical diversity. However, this trend tends to be reversed near the River Trent, perhaps as a result of increased salinity and pollution levels".

"All of the major bodies that carry out weed cutting and channel management in the Isle of Axholme (EA, IDBs and BW) are guided by the need to control flooding. This means that along most watercourses weed cutting occurs once or twice a year, and in addition quite a lot of bank vegetation is mown annually or more frequently. While this may be seen by some as counter-productive for wildlife in general, the watercourse survey data suggest a beneficial effect as far as plants are concerned".

RECEIVED

17. STAFFING

One staffing matter was discussed and is recorded on Pink Paper.

CHAIRMAN