

## **WITHAM FIRST DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

**Minutes of the one hundred and fifteenth meeting of Witham First District Internal Drainage Board, incorporating the Annual Public Meeting, held on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 via video conference at 2pm.**

*Present:*

Mr. P. Gilbert	<b>Chairman</b>
Mr D. Armstrong	<b>Vice Chairman</b>
Mr E. Applewhite	
Cllr B. Bean	
Mr D. Busby	
Mr. P. Carrott	
Mr. S. Cobb	
Mr. R. A. Fletcher	
Mr. M. Harrison	
Cllr. M. Head	
Cllr. G. Hewson	
Mr. R. Hickling	
Cllr. P. Lundgren	
Mr I. Mair	
Dr. B. Maplethorpe	
Cllr. P. Vaughan	

*In attendance:*

Mr Ian Coupland	Acting Director of Operations
Miss Jayne Flower	Executive Assistant
Mrs Jane Froggatt	Chief Executive
Mr Guy Hird	Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services
Mr Steve Larter	Director of Finance & Governance

### **2409 Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. I. Carrington, Mr. J.R. Crust, Mr. W. Grantham, Mr. A. Hodgson, Mr. D. Jackson, Mr. D. Leggate, Mr. S. Leggate, Mr. S. Maplethorpe, Mr. A. Means, Mr. C. R. Oxby and Dr. V. Stanton.

### **2410 Declarations of Interest.**

Declarations of interest were received from members appointed by City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council, in matters relating to their respective Councils.

### **2411 Election of Chairman.**

The Chief Executive welcomed members and invited nominations for the role of Chairman. Mr. Peter Gilbert, was proposed by Mr Steve Cobb, seconded by Mark Harrison and, there being no further nominations, he was elected unanimously by all members present for the forthcoming year.

## **2412 Chairman's Announcements.**

The Chairman welcomed members to the November meeting of the Board, incorporating the Annual Public Meeting, and the third meeting held by video conference.

He thanked members for electing him as Chairman for a further year, which will be his fifth and final year as Chairman. The Board's Standing Orders define a maximum term of office of 5 years.

In terms of Board membership, the only issue highlighted was the vacant seat for the electoral district of Sleaford District amongst directly elected members. October 2021 will be the next 3-yearly Elections for the Board, but if anyone is aware of a potential member who may wish to be co-opted to fill the vacancy on an interim basis, members were asked to contact the Chairman or the Chief Executive.

Being the Annual Public Meeting, members were reminded that the Register of Members' Interests form was in hard copy in agenda papers, for members' completion and return to Witham House. For convenience, Jayne Flower had distributed a Word version via email, for completion and return, should online submission be more convenient.

He was pleased to once again welcome Ian Coupland and Guy Hird to the meeting, in Martin Shilling's absence. Members were advised that Martin is making steady progress, following his heart attack and treatment on 17th September. It was anticipated that Martin may return to work in mid-January.

Finally, the Chairman noted that much of the agenda was routine but was pleased to note that the Board was in a far healthier financial position than was the case at this point at the end of October last year.

## **2413 Election of Vice Chairman.**

Mr. David Armstrong was proposed, seconded and, there being no further nominations, was elected unanimously to the role.

David thanked members for re-electing him.

## **2414 Election of nine members to the Executive Committee.**

Nine members were proposed, seconded and, there being no further nominations, were elected en bloc to the Executive Committee for the forthcoming year to November 2021. These were the Chairman (Mr. Peter Gilbert), the Vice Chairman (Mr. David. Armstrong), Mr. E. Applewhite, Mr. S. Cobb, Mr. R. A. Fletcher, Mr. D. Jackson, Mr. R. Oxby, Mr. M. Harrison and Mr. S. Maplethorpe.

## **2415 Election of 3 members and 2 deputies to the Joint Services Committee.**

The current members of the Joint Services Committee were all re-elected, namely the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Mr. R. A. Fletcher. Deputies elected were Mr. S. Cobb and Mr. M. Harrison.

## **2416 Calendar of Board and Executive Committee meetings for 2021.**

Members approved the following dates for meetings during 2021:

### **Board meetings 2pm**

- Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January.
- Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> May
- Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> September
- Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> November (+Annual Public Meeting)

### **Executive Committee Meetings (2pm):**

- Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> January
- Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> May
- Tuesday, 07<sup>th</sup> September
- Tuesday, 02<sup>nd</sup> November

It was also noted that the 4 Witham & Humber IDBs' joint Annual Inspection was planned for Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.

## **2417 Register of Members' Interests.**

A copy of the Register of Members' Interests form had been circulated with the agenda. Members were requested to complete and return it to Witham House, so that an up-to-date Register for November 2020 to November 2021 is maintained. Members were advised of the importance of this being an accurate record. The information in the Register may be subject, for example, to an FOI request and public disclosure and the Register serves as both protection for the Board and for individual members.

## **2418 Minutes of the Board meeting, 22.09.20.**

The Minutes of the Board's previous meeting held on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, were proposed by Cllr Pat Vaughan, seconded by Steve Cobb and APPROVED as an accurate record.

### ***MATTERS ARISING:***

#### **2418.1 Capital Schemes (minute 2390.4 refers)**

It was confirmed that the Metheringham Fen Pumping Station scheme was being progressed. A total of £163,000 was received in March 2020, from the EA FDGiA monies, for a scheme to refurbish the pumping Station in 2020/21. A £5,000 contribution from the Pumping Station Renewal Fund had been agreed by the Board on 30.06.20 and Invitations to Tender for the PS replacement control panel had been sent out. Four tenders had been returned by 15.10.20. Of the four, after initial evaluation, two were being compared in detail.

It was also confirmed that Alan Gardner, part-time Consents Officer and Engineer, was now working on the Billingham Pumping Station Business Case, to potentially give a different and more flexible pumping regime at Billingham and/or Timberland pumping stations. This would potentially be a further Grant in Aid submission if the benefits from the scheme meet grant criteria.

#### 2418.3 EA Meetings (minute 2390.5 refers)

It was reported that an outcome of discussion with the EA on 22.07.20 about watercourses and how they performed in winter 2019/20 was agreement for a joint review of maintenance in the Billingham catchment, led by the EA but involving the EA, the Board and the NFU. A Strategic Group had been established, which the Chairman and Chief Executive had joined alongside Simon Fisher from the NFU and a Working Group, which the Director of Operations & Engineering had joined with Dr Bridget Maplethorpe as the landowner representative.

Members will be briefed on progress on this work, this being one of 6 such Reviews in Lincolnshire following the flood events of last autumn and winter (others include the Steepings following the Wainfleet breach of June 2019, Isle of Axholme and the Upper Witham Review).

The next meeting is due to be held on 08.12.20.

#### **2419 Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting 03.11.20.**

The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 03<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed by Mr Steve Cobb, seconded by Mr Ed Applewhite and APPROVED as an accurate record. The recommendations to the Board from the subcommittee were noted.

#### *MATTERS ARISING:*

*There were no matters arising, all being covered by the agenda.*

#### **2420 Chief Executive's Report.**

The Chief Executive's report had been circulated with the agenda and the following items were highlighted:

##### 2420.1 Covid-19.

The 4 Boards' arrangements to maintain business continuity were updated following the Prime Minister's announcement on 31st October introducing restrictions from Thursday, 05th November to Wednesday, 02nd December 2020.

Those staff based at Witham House office have been asked to now work from home wherever practicable, coming into the office by exception and only when necessary for specific duties which cannot be undertaken from home. Staff have been provided with ICT and mobile phones to support working from home.

The main office number 01522 697123 continues to be answered remotely during office hours, using the Unity phone app. Calls are triaged to the most

appropriate person. When staff do go into the office, the post is opened, scanned and sent on electronically. Meetings continue via video conferencing; the Boards having paid for use of zoom for 12 months. The office will be closed to visitors and the public, unless by prior appointment for an essential purpose. The QR Test and Trace Code has been downloaded and is at use at UW's office / depot and each of the other 3 depots.

All Boards' Operatives will continue with the summer maintenance programme, with observance of the single person vehicle cab use policy, and with Operatives going straight from home to machines. The depots will be used only when necessary, for example for refuelling, but communal areas like the mess rooms and kitchens are to be avoided.

PPE like hand sanitiser, gloves, wipes, face masks and fogging aerosols is available for all staff to use, in the office and at the 4 depots. The emphasis is on 'Hands, Face & Space', encouraging frequent thorough hand washing, use of face coverings in circulation areas away from individual workspaces and working at a recommended distance of 2 metres and where this cannot be achieved and 1 metre is required, a dynamic risk assessment and use of precautions like face coverings.

There continues to be some logistical problems, e.g., when we have plant breakdowns and with the restrictions of not sharing vehicles which means we hire more low-loader moves. However, these are being worked around.

The emphasis remains on following national guidance and thereby to provide a safe working environment for our staff, to provide as much continuity of service as practicable, to reduce the risk of cross-infection in the workplace in order to both relieve pressure on the NHS and to ensure we keep a resilient workforce able to respond should we have a flood event.

#### 2420.2 ADA Lincolnshire Branch Recommended Pay Award 2021/22.

The four IDBs' representative on the ADA Lincolnshire Branch's Pay & Conditions Committee is Cllr. Lance Pennell, NKDC nominated member of Upper Witham IDB. He and the Chief Executive attended the last meeting of the Committee on 07.10.20 at which the proposed pay settlement for 2021/22 [from 01.04.21] was discussed. This is year two in a three-year pay deal agreed in October 2019. The agreement is based on ONS data on Average Weekly Earnings [AWE] for total pay in the public sector, using 3 months rolling average [KAC9] for the 3 months May, June and July 2020 compared with a YOY average for the same 3 months of last year 2019, as published in September 2020. The figure published in September was a useful baseline, to enable budget setting work to build in the estimated pay costs into next year's budgets. This figure is 4.1%.

The Pay & Conditions Committee acknowledged that the figure was higher than anticipated, attributable largely to the additional hours worked in the public sector during Covid-19 in the relevant 3 months of 2020, compared with 2019. However, after discussion between management and staff sides of the Committee, it was acknowledged that a deal was a deal and it was agreed unanimously by those members present that it be recommended to the full ADA Lincolnshire Branch (in

return some other claims, e.g., hours harmonisation at 37 hours from 38 per week were dropped by staff side).

The ADA Lincolnshire Branch meeting on 21.10.20 agreed unanimously to adopt the recommended pay settlement of 4.1% for 2021/22. It noted that with the 8 heavy rainfall events of Autumn/ Winter 2019/20 and the challenges that presented in dealing with several flood events, plus the challenge of Covid-19 thereafter, this was appropriate.

It is, however, for each individual Board to determine pay settlements. The Board was therefore asked to determine whether it wished to adopt the ADA Lincolnshire Branch's recommended pay settlement of 4.1% for 2021/22. This was proposed by Cllr. Pat Vaughan seconded by Cllr. Gary Hewson and unanimously AGREED by members.

### 2420.3 Capital Schemes.

#### Metheringham Fen Pumping Station.

Following invitations to tender for a new control panel at the pumping station, a substantial part of the FDGiA funded refurbishment scheme this year [with a £5k partnership contribution from the Board], 4 tenders were returned for 15.10.20, and one company declined to quote. The non-financial evaluation is currently being undertaken.

#### Farroway Pumping Station

At the Board's last meeting, a question was asked about the breakdown of costs to date in acquiring the land to provide vehicle access to the pumping station, the legal costs of the purchase, the costs in laying the track etc. This is as follows:

##### **Costs incurred to date (19/10/20)**

Purchase of Land	£ 7,462.50	0.597 acres @£12,500 per acre
Legal Fees*	£ 1,516.00	
3rd Party Legal Fees	£ 1,176.00	
Construct Access Track	£16,732.08	
<b>Total scheme costs</b>	<b>£26,886.58</b>	

*\*There may be an additional fee yet to be paid for registering the title with Land Registry*

However, although there is now an access track to site, the scheme design for a Weedscreen and deck needs to be pursued.

The Chief Executive's report and update was received and noted.

### **2421 External Auditors' Notice of Closure on IDB Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20.**

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Director of Finance and Governance.

The Annual Return 2019/20 was agreed at the Board meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, subsequently published on the Board's website for public inspection and despatched to the External Auditor on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. The public inspection period was from 6<sup>th</sup> July until 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Due to the impact of the Covid lockdown, the Board had until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to submit its Annual Return 2019/20 (normally 30<sup>th</sup> June) and the External Auditor has until 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (normally 30<sup>th</sup> September) to complete their work and publish the report.

The External Auditor has a statutory deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> September (extended to 30<sup>th</sup> November for 2020 only) to complete their external audit and publish the formal Completion of Audit Certificate (Section 3 of Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)). This was issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 and received on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Part 2 of section 3 of the AGAR has been completed as follows; 'On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met'. Under the section 'Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority' they have reported 'None'.

This therefore completed the External Audit for 2019/20 and the Board, along with the other 3 Boards in the Witham & Humber group, had all received the same Audit opinion with no issues to report to members. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was issued on 28<sup>th</sup> September and has been displayed at the Board's depot, on the Board's website and at Witham House.

Members noted the External Audit Notice of Closure on the IDB Annual Return 2019/20.

#### **2422 Schedule of Expenditure, 01.09.20 to 31.10.20.**

The Schedule of Expenditure for the two months' period of 2020/21, from 01<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance & Governance.

Gross expenditure totalled £217,015.46 or, net of £21,521.72 VAT, £195,493.74. It was emphasized that this is the invoices paid in the 2 months period, and some invoices relating to the period may not be included.

Items highlighted to or raised by members included:

- Item 55: £2,000 (net) to PKF Littlejohn LLP for External Audit fees, for the year ended 31.03.20.
- Items 58-61: various to Rix Petroleum for fuel. Members were advised that although the price of fuel had decreased, works had now increased.
- Item 63: £15.60 (net) with £53.78 VAT and gross £69.38 to Robert H Crawford & Son for 1 packet of 6 toilet rolls. This was clearly an error and would be queried.

Members received and NOTED the expenditure incurred between 01.09.20 and 31.10.20.

## **2423 Financial Performance Report to 31<sup>st</sup> October, month 7 of 2020/21.**

The Director of Finance & Governance presented the Financial Performance Report for the first 7 months of 2020/21 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, which had been circulated with the agenda. A summary table of the overall income and expenditure position was presented, as follows:

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2020/21 Budget</b>	<b>Profiled Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Income	(985,865)	(957,645)	(966,333)	(8,688)
Board & General Admin	13,920	7,120	6,466	(654)
One Off Schemes	25,000	2,500	(275)	(2,775)
Conservation	1,750	483	265	(218)
Depot	12,610	10,347	10,558	211
Drains	351,688	271,830	311,467	39,637
Pumping Stations	193,860	51,862	55,574	3,712
Joint Admin/Witham House	96,410	48,570	51,528	2,958
Consents & Enforcement	10,278	0	0	0
Director of Operations/Engineers	66,452	41,411	40,697	(714)
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	40,000	0	0	0
PWLB	29,207	13,309	13,162	(147)
Rechargeable Works	60,000	40,836	58,915	18,079
EA Precept	84,690	42,345	41,516	(830)
FRS17 Pension Adjustment (net)				0
Wages & Plant Holding Account	0	(34,138)	(90,209)	(56,071)
<b>(Surplus)/Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(461,170)</b>	<b>(466,670)</b>	<b>(5,500)</b>

The Board's budget profile was for a surplus of (£461,170) as at 31.10.20 and the actual position was a surplus of (£466,670), a minor positive variance of (£5,500) against budget, with some rechargeable works like PSCA works for the EA still to be invoiced.

The main income streams were in terms of Drainage Rates and Special Levies. Special Levy income was currently at (£385k) received for the full year from the 2 Councils. Drainage Rates income collected as of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 was (£500,086.67) of £507,443.42 raised for 2020/21, a collection rate of 98.4% (by comparison, 97.1% at the similar month 7 in 2019/20). After adjustments, £8,140.65 drainage rates income was outstanding to the Board as at 31.10.20. First reminders were despatched to account holders on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and final reminders were despatched on 06<sup>th</sup> October 2020. A court date has not yet been set due to the current Covid-19 restrictions on Lincoln Court.

Rechargeable PSCA works were being undertaken for the EA and (£16k) had been invoiced. Charges to other Boards amounted to (£17k).

The new Atlas 150W wheeled excavator had been purchased for £186,650 (excluding VAT). The previous Atlas 140W was subsequently sold to Upper Witham IDB for the same trade in value offered of (£32k).



The Bank Balances as at 31.10.20 were set out as follows:

**As at 31st October 2020**

Natwest	£	514,866.33
Nationwide Instant Access	£	359,676.33
Nationwide 90 Day Notice	£	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b><u>874,542.66</u></b>

The Board's Public Works Loan Board loan was being repaid as follows, with £171,127.80 now outstanding:

**PWLB Loan - Balance Outstanding**

**2.41%**

**£ 171,127.80**

*Original loan £354,480. Loan period 14.5 years from 17/12/2012. Maturity date 17th June 2027  
Repayments made 17th June and 17th December each year.*

Members received and noted the financial performance report to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020/21.

**2424 Health and Safety Update.**

A Health and Safety update had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Acting Director of Operations, Ian Coupland.

The Operatives started back full-time days on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, and they were provided with all the PPE required to carry out their duties safely, whilst still observing social distancing and only go out one man to a vehicle. PPE is available to everyone, including aerosol cans of "Fogging" disinfectant that has been tested and does kill Coronavirus for shared vehicles and machinery. All drivers have been instructed to Fog their machines and vans at night before finishing and when anyone else has had access to their machine. Following the new guidance office staff are again working from home, wherever possible and measures have been put in place to make the office accessible to limited staff at any one time, through a Booking system, with Jayne Flower managing the requests. The Office is currently closed to the public and visitors, unless by prior arrangement. These arrangements and the Risk assessments are reviewed weekly at the Senior Management Team Meetings.

Cope, external Health and Safety Provider have completed their annual review and advised of the need to guard all the diesel pumping station engines with modern guards. Quotes are being obtained for this work. They have also reviewed and updated some generic risk assessments.

Pleasingly there were no accidents or near misses to report. The planned video conference Health and Safety Meeting for October is currently being rescheduled. All Operatives except three have successfully completed the annual Overhead Cable Training.

The company fitting the Cab Hand Rails have yet to complete this task due to shutting down the factory and furloughing the staff. They have reopened on reduced staffing levels and will resume our order as soon as they can.

As reported previously, Witham First access bridge to Ringmoor Pumping Station is still being investigated (ascertaining ownership via the Environment Agency).

Farroway pumping station weed screen platform is a potential future scheme.

Members received, discussed and noted the Health and Safety update.

### **2425 Environment Report.**

A report prepared by the Environment & GIS Technician had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services.

All but one of the owl boxes checked in summer 2020 was used by either Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), Stock dove (*Columba oenas*) or Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*).

Generally, it has been a relatively poor year for barn owls and tawny owls. This is thought to be because of a very wet start to 2020, as neither tawny nor barn owls have waterproof feathers, and will not head out to hunt when it is raining so a prolonged wet period is very bad news for both species. However, it has been a good year UK-wide for kestrels, who in turn are waterproof.

The wildflower meadow at Metheringham Pumping Station had another successful year of growth. The success of a meadow is dependent on many factors, including soil type, however correct maintenance is arguably most important. Mowing in late summer and leaving the initial mowings in situ for a few days to allow seed to drop to the ground will ensure that a meadow can return year after year. The meadow at Digby Pumping Station enjoyed its second year of bloom, after being planted in spring 2018. Both meadows include species such as yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) and oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). They are topped in late July/early August with the flower heads being allowed to dry and drop their seed before being removed two weeks later. The dropped seed allows the meadow to return annually. All wildflower meadows are monitored and topped up with seed as required, in either Autumn or Spring.

The Sleaford Beekeepers' Association is now using a small open area within a conservation area owned by Witham First DIDB off Thorpe Tilney Drove to house some honeybee colonies (*Apis mellifera*). One third of the UK's bee population has disappeared over the past decade, so it has never been more important to find areas to house these populations.

The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) with which the Board works closely in partnership has appointed a new Partnership Manager, Charlotte Palmer. The Board's Environment Officer has been in contact with Charlotte and has sent over some materials explaining more about IDBs and has offered to show her some environmentally important sites within the 4 Boards' areas.

COVID-19 restrictions allowing, the 4 Boards will be hosting a Year 2 Geography student placement from February to June 2021. Students who have shown in interest in a placement with the Boards will be interviewed by the Environment Officer and HR Consultant (likely via Zoom or Microsoft Teams) and the best candidate will be selected. The placement will introduce the student to Internal Drainage Boards and what they do, as well as showing the student the environment side of IDBs and actions they take to conserve and enhance the environment.

ADA will be officially releasing their updated Biodiversity Action Plan template to be in line with various legislation and policy including, but not limited to, the Environment Bill (Act) 2020, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the 25 Year Environment Plan and Water Framework Directive.

The Board's Environment and GIS Technician will be undertaking Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) training with the British Trust for Ornithology online. These skills will be applied working in wetland areas within Board areas.

Members received and noted the Environment Report.

### **2426 Revised Water Vole Policy**

A copy of the policy and a report highlighting the updates had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services.

This policy helps protect and enhance the water vole habitats and population associated with the 4 Boards' land and the drainage channels in the districts.

Updates to the policy are as follows:

- The addition of 'The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook' as guidance for the Boards. This handbook is very well used by those in environmental vocations (ecologists, environmental managers, etc) and is endorsed by the UK Water Vole Steering Group. A PDF copy of the handbook is held by the Board Environment and GIS Technician.
- The addition of encouraging Board staff to report water vole activity via their species recording app 'iRecord', data of which is sent to Lincolnshire Records Centre (part of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership).
- Inclusion of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 when undertaking all works, ensuring that all works have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity. IDBs, as a public authority, have a legal duty to follow the NERC Act (2006).

Members APPROVED the updated water vole policy.

### **2427 Director of Operations & Engineering Services' Report.**

The Director of Operations & Engineering Services' report had been circulated with the agenda and, in his absence, was presented by the Acting Director of Operations and the Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services:

#### **Planned Maintenance Programmes**

Following an early start to the annual summer maintenance programme on Upper Witham, Witham First and Witham Third Boards, and a usual start date of mid-July on North East Lindsey, works are progressing well.

Witham First have completed works in the north of the district that would normally not be completed until November/December. They have also completed PSCA works commissioned by the EA and this is up to date. However, the EA have asked the Board not to commence works on the Sleas and Old Sleas as it is too wet and there is little growth. This is not seen as an issue.

The new Atlas 150w wheeled machine has had to go back to TDL, after developing a hydraulic fault that needed repair in a clean environment. It was with them for 2 weeks and is now back with us. Also, on plant, fuel has been stolen from 2 machines that were parked overnight in Bardney. The theft has been reported to the police.

### Farroway Pumping Station

Farroway has one pump and motor out for repair. The pump is with Perry Pumps of Lincoln and the Motor is at Edgar Allen Mining and both will be back with us shortly. The second pump may well require investigation and works once the first is back in full operation.

### Metheringham Fen Pumping Station

This station has attracted Flood Defence Grant in Aid monies allocated via the EA in the sum of £163,000, subject to a contribution from the Board of a further £5,000 as approved at the June meeting. These monies will be used to replace or refurbish the elements of the site as listed:

- Replace existing MCC (pump control panel)
- Replace outfall flap valves
- Refurbish automated weed screen cleaner
- Health & Safety improvements including fencing, site lighting and steps

Tenders from four companies for the new MCC were returned by 15th October and to date are being evaluated. A meeting is scheduled for Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November to clarify some points with the companies that have submitted a tender. A decision is expected next week (w/c Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020).

Tenders for the replacement flap valves will be issued. Both pieces of work are to be complete before 31st March 2021.

Two officers will be on-site tomorrow, Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, to survey for fencing.

### Billingham Pumping Station and Timberland Pumping Station

A business case is currently being produced for a potential application to the EA for a Flood Defence Grant in Aid scheme. The scheme is looking at both pumped catchments and the inter-action between them.

### Structures

Proposals to replace the existing Weedscreen deck on Farroway Bankside Drain and to provide an alternative access to Ringmoor Pumping Station continue to be developed. Both are health & safety issues for the Board, and so affordable and sustainable solutions are required.

## **Environment Agency**

### Lower River Witham Strategy Review & Bilinghay System Review

Officers and Board members have attended several meetings relating to the EA led reviews, at the invitation of the EA. These reviews relate to two aspects of the lower River Witham system. The strategic review is tasked with looking at how the whole of the lower River Witham system is to be maintained and operated into the future, whilst the Bilinghay system review is a much more local approach focusing on maintenance and the effects a system failure has on the adjacent Witham 1st District IDB system following the heavy rainfall events of Autumn 2019.

The EA are to issue a scoping document requesting prices for various elements of work from their framework consultant, Arup. Over the next 2 years the system is to be re-surveyed and the existing computer based hydraulic model is to be updated to reflect the current condition of the system. Arup have been appointed to undertake the strategy review and their work will include the management of the topographical survey work, model update,

updating hydraulic information used within the modelling exercise, stakeholder engagement and development of the business case document by 2022.

The strategy, which was originally produced in the late 1990's and resulted in the rebuilding of many kilometres of raised earth embankments in the early 2000's, is reviewed every 5 years. This review will consider the existing preferred option of 'providing additional storage' and how the existing system effects the adjacent IDB pumped and gravity systems.

The review of the Billingham system review will take information generated by the topographic survey of the watercourses and consider the need for de-silting of the various channels. The current method and specification of annual maintenance will also be discussed along with the need for more enthusiastic maintenance of bushes and trees within the main river system. EA officers will hold site meetings with the local landowners who have experienced problems over the years within the Digby and Dorrington Fen areas; with officers from the Board and NFU assisting wherever possible.

Any future projects for capital work within the system will depend on a combination of both Defra Grant in Aid and partnership funding.

The importance of the defences in protecting the adjacent land has already been raised along with the need for a decision as to the long-term value, in the wider sense, of the adjacent land.

A joint questionnaire from the Board, the EA and the NFU has been sent out this week to the circa 200 local landowners and tenants within the catchment, with responses invited between 02nd and 27th November 2020.

Members noted the Operations report and update for November 2020.

### **2428 Engineering Services Report.**

The Engineering Services Report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services.

One issue was highlighted to members, with the response that had been submitted to NKDC detailed as:

**Demolition of existing workshop/garage/office/store and erection of one dwelling and garage. Tegan Harrison Place Tattershall Bridge Road Tattershall Bridge Lincoln Lincolnshire LN4 4JL**

In the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) the Board **Objects** to the application.

**Reason:** The FRA submitted with the application does not acknowledge the Flood Risk to location which is only 180m to the rear of the River Witham earth flood bank, a breach at this location would definitely be a risk. The events of last winter where there was a very real risk of breach on the Billingham Skirth near to the location graphically illustrates the risk with the amount of the emergency actions/evacuation taken and work required to prevent it. The first line of the summary says the Witham does not pose any threat this is very misleading and inaccurate.

In addition, the Billingham Skirth is dismissed but is a major watercourse with its own large catchment elevated from the fen and with earth flood bank.

The FRA states the standard of protection of the flood banks to the River Witham and Billingham Skirth is 1 in 1000, this contradicts the Environment Agency information which shows a large area affected (with defences) for a 1 in 20 event.

The FRA fails to include information of how the site and Fen is drained. It is all pumped by the Witham First District Internal Drainage Board pumping stations without which the whole fen including this site would be underwater.

It is however noted that the FRA does contain appropriate mitigation.

Comment and information to Lincolnshire CC Highway SUDs Support

The suitability of new soakaways, as a means of surface water disposal, should be to an appropriate standard and to the satisfaction of the Approving Authority in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority. If the suitability is not proven the

Applicant should be requested to re-submit amended proposals showing how the Site is to be drained. Should this be necessary this Board would wish to be reconsulted.

Members received and noted the Engineering Services report.

## **2429 Consents and Enforcements**

A Consents and Enforcements report had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Acting Head of Technical & Engineering Services.

Peter Gilbert, Chairman, declared an interest in item FD-5349-2020CON.

Cases were summarised as follows:

### Byelaw Consent Applications

Reference	Location	Applicant	Details	Date
FD-5305-2020-CON	Drury Dyke, Home Farm, Chapel Hill	G S Grantham Ltd	450mm dia. piped connection	28-09-20
FD-5349-2020-CON	Farm dyke /Roberts (aka) Rooks Drain	T G Gilbert (Walcot) Ltd	Access culvert at least 400mm dia.	15-10-20

Section 23 Land Drainage Act Consent Applications – District  
None received.

Section 23 Land Drainage Act Consent Applications – Extended Area  
The Board acts as Agent for Lincolnshire County Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority.  
None received.

### Enforcement Issues – District

Reference	Location	Description /Comments	Actions
FD-3835-2018-ENF	Sleaford Rugby Club	Blocked watercourse	Awaiting response from Network Rail
FD-3880-2018-ENF	Leavingham beck field	Issue with watercourse	Suggested course of action awaiting response.
FD-4927-2019-ENF	Electric Station Road, Sleaford	Flooding in garden	Awaiting investigation

### Enforcement Issues – Extended Area

Reference	Location	Description /Comments	Actions
FE-5000-2020-ENF	Highfield Station Road, Potterhanworth	Unconsented watercourse filled in	Watercourse has been reinstated Case closed 10-9-20
FE-5036-2020-ENF	Walnut House, Timberland	Filling in of watercourse	No further action
FE-5101-2020-ENF	Potterhanworth Road, Heighington	Highway flooding	Case closed 29-10-20
FE-5280-2020-ENF	Edge of Dorrington	Potential obstruction to flow in watercourse	Landowner has agreed to clear the watercourse

Members were informed of a potential issue of consent in an area of Scopwick which had been raised since the report was prepared, on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The issue would be investigated, and members informed at the next meeting whether this one would be for the Board to act on its own or within the Extended Area.

Members received and noted the report on Consents and Enforcements.

**2430 Any Other Business.**

There were no further items of business and the meeting closed at 15.10.

**2431 Date, Time and Place of the Board's Next Meeting.**

The Board's next meeting was confirmed for Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 2pm, venue and format TBC (but likely to be by video conference).

..... Chairman ..... Date  
W1st BM 17.11.20