

## WITHAM FIRST DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

**Minutes of the one hundred and thirteenth meeting of Witham First District Internal Drainage Board, held on Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 via video conference at 2pm.**

*Present:*

Mr. P. Gilbert	<b>Chairman</b>
Mr. D. Armstrong	<b>Vice Chairman</b>
Cllr. B. Bean	
Cllr. I. Carrington	
Mr. P. Carrott	
Mr. S Cobb	
Mr. R.A. Fletcher	
Mr. M. Harrison	
Cllr. G. Hewson	
Mr. R. C. Hickling	
Mr. D. Jackson	
Mr. S. Leggate	
Cllr. P. Lundgren	
Dr. B. Maplethorpe	
Mr. A R. Means	
Cllr. P. Vaughan	

*In attendance:*

Miss Jayne Flower	Executive Assistant
Mrs Jane Froggatt	Chief Executive
Mr Chris Harris	Internal Auditor, TIAA
Mr Guy Hird	Engineering Services Officer
Mr Steve Larter	Director of Finance & Governance
Mr Martin Shilling	Director of Operations and Engineering Services.

### **2366 Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. E. Applewhite, Mr. D. Busby, Mr. J. Crust, Mr. W. Grantham, Cllr. M. Head, Mr. A. Hodgson, Mr. D. Leggate, Mr. I. Mair, Mr. S. Maplethorpe, Mr R. Oxby and Dr. V. Stanton.

### **2367 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.

### **2368 Chairman's Announcements.**

The Chairman welcomed members to the June meeting of the Board. This would be the first Board meeting held via videoconference. It was new territory for all attendees in this highly unusual period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He also welcomed Chris Harris, Internal Auditor, to the meeting to present his independent Report on the last financial year 2019/20 and also his audit certificate arising from that, to

form part of the Board's Annual Governance and Accountability Return [AGAR]. Chris had indicated that he would remain throughout the meeting.

Members were advised that much of the agenda was necessarily finance focussed at this time of year, to close the last financial year ended 31st March 2020. However, there was also an update on the new depot and office scheme, various operational issues and pleasingly a successful grant aided scheme to report in relation to Metheringham Pumping Station Refurbishment Scheme.

### **2369 Revised Standing Orders.**

A report and proposed revised Standing Orders had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chief Executive advised members that on 23rd March 2020, the PM announced that people should stay home in order to stay safe, reduce the transmission of Covid-19 to others and to reduce the burden on the NHS. The national lockdown started on 24th March bringing certain challenges to all, both personally and in undertaking work duties. However, Officers and Staff remained under clear Government instruction to stay home and only leave home for essentials such as food or medicine, for work [when that work cannot be done at home and it is essential to do it] or to exercise. This meant the scheduled May Board meetings were postponed pending further guidance.

The IDBs received confirmation in early April that the statutory reporting deadlines would be extended by three months for all Category 1 and 2 public authorities. This included IDBs. This gives the 4 Boards the fall-back position that ADA and SAAA had been seeking regarding all specified deadlines that are part of the Accountability & Governance Annual Return [AGAR] process.

Local authorities were provided with Regulations to enable Council meetings and committees to be held remotely by teleconference or WebEx. IDBs were not included in these regulations.

However, ADA continued to discuss potential amendments with Defra, including those required to IDBs' model Standing Orders to enable IDBs to hold their Board Meetings virtually by WebEx or teleconference facilities akin to the flexibility afforded to other parts of local government. ADA encouraged Defra to provide a straightforward procedure that would enable IDBs to adopt proposed new paragraphs within their Standing Orders quickly and easily.

On behalf of each of the 4 IDBs, the Chairmen requested via ADA that the Defra Minister approve an amendment to each IDB's existing approved Standing Orders to introduce new rules 28 and 29. These new rules were incorporated within the revised Standing Orders. The basis of the amendment and the certificate of approval requested was, given the current circumstances in respect of Covid-19, and the restrictions in the UK on meetings in public, to provide flexibility to each Board to be able to convene and host on-line meetings in order to conduct the Board's business.

Ministerial approval for the attached revised Standing Orders, to include new rules 28 and 29, was granted on 17.04.20 for a period until 07.05.21.

Members APPROVED Chairman's action in seeking Defra approval for revised Standing Orders and those Standing Orders were APPROVED and ADOPTED, enabling the Board's business to be conducted by virtual videoconference meetings.

## **2370 Minutes of the Board meeting, 28.01.20.**

The Minutes of the Board's previous meeting, held on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, were proposed by Richard Hickling, seconded by David Jackson and APPROVED as an accurate record.

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

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

## **2371 Chief Executive's Report.**

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

### **2371.1 Covid-19.**

When the Boards approved the revised Risk Register in January 2020, we did not foresee the significant risk of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our business continuity. Nonetheless, arrangements have been put in place to enable a skeletal service to continue for the 4 IDBs since the PM announced the pandemic lock down on 23rd March and that everyone should stay home, stay safe and protect the NHS

In the 3 Boards with a direct workforce, Operatives have been rostered for and worked a different working pattern. They worked from home, avoiding use of the depots and shared mess room/ lavatory facilities. They went straight to work from home, and each covered part of the drainage district. Priorities were the checking and maintenance of pumping stations, the checking of watercourses with obstruction runs and checks on culverts and the clearance of weed screen debris at Pumping Stations. In order to maintain safe working practices, there has inevitably been additional cost. We are operating a single cab use policy [so there is some duplication in journeys and fuel usage], have purchased additional hand tools to equip Operatives to take these straight from home in work vans and we have provided additional PPE including hand sanitiser gels, gloves, wipes and face masks available to all staff. The 4 IDB depots were not closed to staff, they were there for use as needed, but they were closed to visitors and the public unless by prior arrangement.

From Monday, 18th May, following the PM's announcement of some easing of lock down arrangements, Operatives had returned to a wider range of duties but again, risk assessments and method statements have been undertaken and Operatives are working in pairs to minimise the risk of cross-infection and the impact on our workforces should any member of staff have Covid-19 symptoms.

Those staff based at Witham House office have worked from home since 24th March, following the PM's announcement, staff taking home their ICT equipment and the Unity phone app being installed to enable the office number 01522 697123 to be answered remotely during office hours. The Boards have supported flexible working practices, recognising that staff have had home schooling and carer responsibilities, and pleasingly [although with some frustrations] the essential work has been done. The office at Meadow Lane in Hykeham has been closed to visitors, but staff have operated a booking policy to use office facilities

when necessary [e.g. to access hard copy records, to seal legal agreements, to use photo copiers, the franking machine, to collate and despatch the hundreds of drainage rates invoices for the 4 Boards in April, to process the payroll each month, to receive and scan post received and distribute it]. National guidance remains to work from home wherever possible and this continues. For staff using Witham House we have agreed preferred working days and practices which mean we minimise the number of staff present at any one time and can observe social distancing. These are very different ways of working and fortunately there was a 'New Ways of Working Group' established to contribute to the move to the new Witham House office in mid-February. This forum has continued and proved useful to keep everyone in touch, briefed and able to contribute, and we continue to have a videoconference zoom meeting every Tuesday afternoon for an hour. Management Team has met weekly each Thursday, again using zoom video conferencing, and a standing item on our agenda is Covid-19 and a review of our arrangements. On behalf of the 4 Boards we have subscribed to zoom for 12 months at a cost of £1,294.92, enabling unlimited usage and sufficient participants to meet our 4 Boards' meeting requirements. There is an additional cost too in equipping staff with mobile phones and in additional ICT equipment. But it does provide for more flexible, agile working post Covid-19 and will undoubtedly change and modernise working practices. For example, all external meetings have been cancelled but have been largely rearranged as video conferencing meetings, e.g. Now fortnightly ADA national meetings.

There have been some interruptions to our services and some things have taken longer than we would wish, e.g. we have found a number of companies to whom we have issued 'invitations to tender' to provide services are unable to respond and some of our pumping station works have slowed as contractors have furloughed their staff [e.g. the refurbishment of W3rd's Stainfield PS].

Nonetheless, our priority has been to provide our staff with a safe system of work, to comply with national guidance and to preserve the ability to respond to an emergency flood event, when necessary, whilst continuing to provide a skeletal service.

## 2371.2 Statement of Claim

At the January 2020 Board meetings a key concern in 3 of the 4 Boards [not Upper Witham IDB, this was not an issue in the drainage district ] was the impact on the Boards' systems of incurring third-party costs of dealing with water from EA main river that should not be received in IDB pumping stations and watercourses. The locations were widespread but examples of bank breaches, overtopping and bank seepage impacting severely on the IDBs included the November bank breach at Barlings Eau [W3rd], the 30<sup>th</sup> November bank breach at Timberland Delph [W1st], the November bank breach at Dorrington Catchwater [W1st] and the additional costs incurred at Middle Drain pumping station [NELDB]. A Statement of Claim for reimbursement had been submitted on 20.12.19 and following discussions and correspondence with the EA, the bulk of additional costs incurred were paid to the 3 Boards in March 2020, as follows:

NORTH EAST LINDSEY DB	£ 25,622.05
WITHAM THIRD DIDB	£ 59,933.38
WITHAM FIRST DIDB	£ 122,127.66

This had been a huge relief, as frankly without this money being reimbursed Witham First DIDB would have extremely low reserves remaining.

Mr Steve Cobb commented that this payment does not cover overtopping or flooding to local land. The Branston Delph was a major issue, the left hand bank was just as bad as the right hand bank and he would very much like to see pressure kept on the EA. Martin Shilling noted that Sandhill Beck is one watercourse that Officers have indeed raised with the EA and have requested a review of the long-standing spillway agreement.

### 2371.3 Plant and Machinery

On Witham First, the new wheeled Atlas 150W machine with the 3-part sliding dipper arm at £187,150 [net] was due for delivery imminently. It had been supplied by the manufacturer Atlas to distributor TDL in Sheffield and Mastenbroek have supplied to TDL the sliding arm for fitting prior to delivery. The existing Atlas 140W machine will not now be traded in. The Board was offered a trade-in price of £32,000, but this machine will now be purchased by Upper Witham IDB at that trade-in value.

Upper Witham IDB will purchase the Witham First Atlas 140W wheeled machine to replace its old Atlas Terex machine [which is older and has done many more hours], the Terex being a machine which was retained and not traded in some 2 years ago in order to provide back-up and flexibility in the fleet. Upper Witham will then through TDL sell its Atlas Terex machine.

Part of the rationale for these changes to the plant programmes is to give sufficient flexibility to undertake the PSCA works commissioned for 2020/21 by the Environment Agency and continue with the Boards' own programmes, with as little disruption as practicable.

### 2371.4 Capital Schemes

Since the January Board meetings when a number of schemes were supported in Budget Estimates for 2020/21, a number of other schemes have come forward where, for example, funding was not assured but where Grant in Aid monies have been successful and where for a modest contribution from the Board a worthwhile scheme can be delivered. These include:

- **Metheringham Fen Pumping Station [W1st]**- £163,000 was received in March 2020 from the EA FDGiA monies for a scheme to refurbish the pumping Station in 2020/21. The total scheme cost is £168,000, so this does however require a £5,000 partner contribution from the Board, which is not in this year's budgets. It was proposed that this scheme is supported and the Board funds its contribution from the Pumping Station Renewal Fund.
- After discussion, members AGREED to fund this £5,000 contribution.
- **Billinghay Pumping Station [W1st]**- In 2020/21 the Business Case needs to be developed, to potentially give a different and more flexible pumping regime at Billinghay pumping station.

## 2371.5 Public Sector Co-operation Agreements

The PSCAs for the 4 IDBs expired on 30.11.18 and extensions were granted to enable works to continue. There has been considerable discussion about these agreements, with concern amongst many IDBs nationally that the PSCAs were not reflecting the nature of partnership working between partner Flood Risk Management Authorities [FRMAs], but were being redrafted by the Environment Agency to be more like contracts with their framework contractors. We certainly had issues with some of the content e.g., where it was specified that IDBs would provide a 24/7 call out service to the EA with a 2 hours response time. After much discussion, including a meeting on 05.12.19 between IDB representatives and the EA facilitated by ADA which the Chief Executive attended, some changes were made to the schedules to the PSCAs. Some of the changes requested by IDBs were not accepted and there remains further discussion to conclude working definitions of CDM regulations [ADA has established a working group and the Boards' Operations Manager has joined this]. However, on balance, and in the interests of enabling PSCA work to continue, the Chief Executive signed and returned to the EA the revised PSCAs at the end of May. These will run now until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. A considerable amount of work is being undertaken by each Board in 2020/21, in total the estimated works value across the 4 IDBs is £600,000.

## 2371.6 EA Meetings

Officers met with the EA on 22.07.20 regarding concerns locally about the main EA River systems in Lincolnshire, Digby and Dorrington, among others. Discussion took place on how to respond with a joint plan, it was agreed that quick wins would be identified.

Officers had previously met with the EA on 24.06.20 regarding various issues, but mainly the promised EA recovery plan for 200 sites across Lincolnshire following the heavy rainfall events of Autumn 2019.

One of the outcomes of this discussion is that a joint review of maintenance in Billingham area EA/ IDB systems is to be organised, led by the EA. There will be a Strategic Group, which the Chairman and Chief Executive will join and a Steering Group, which the Director of Operations & Engineering will join with a landowner fen representative TBC.

## 2371.7 Lincoln Water Group – Simon Fisher, NFU

Since 21.11.19 Simon Fisher of the NFU has met regularly with the EA and representatives of the IDBs. Following concerns from residents regarding main rivers he has established a Lincolnshire Water Group to look at flooding, drought etc. David Armstrong, Vice Chairman, has joined this group. The first meeting will be held on 14.07.20.

Bridget Maplethorpe commented that EA representatives had recently visited her land regarding access through her land to their New Cut watercourse. The EA had offered IDB services for the work, which was somewhat surprising. It was noted that the EA did indeed appear to be asking their framework contractor and also the Board to undertake some limited additional works this 2020 summer season.

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

### **2372 Internal Auditor's Independent Report on 2019/20**

The Internal Auditor's independent Report on 2019/20 had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Internal Auditor, Chris Harris of TIAA. Pleasingly, the overall assurance rating for the year was 'Substantial', which is the highest level of assurance rating.

He attended site at the new Witham House office on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th March 2020. While on site, a physical inspection of those assets recorded in the asset register for Upper Witham IDB were inspected and confirmed to exist as well as an examination of records and systems. The key outcomes from the audit were recorded as follows in his report:

1. The overall assurance opinion for 2019/20 is Substantial Assurance and no recommendations have been made this year.
2. Good corporate governance is practiced by the Board with appropriate Board involvement
3. The accounting records are all in order, up to date and in balance.
4. A number of outstanding recommendations from previous audits relating to policy and procedures are due to be reported to the May 2020 Board.
5. A detailed review of Health and Safety identified a well organised and managed system for Health and Safety compliance.

It was noted that on item 4 in his report, relating to Policies, these would now be submitted to a meeting of the 4 Boards' Joint Services Committee on 20.07.20.

Members noted the summary of key findings and conclusions flowing from the 2019/20 Internal Audit, accepted the assurance rating, and the Chairman thanked Chris Harris for his detailed report.

### **2373 Schedule of Expenditure, 01.01.20 to 31.03.20**

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

Gross expenditure totalled £265,149.03 or, net of £29,164.72 VAT, £235,984.31. Of this, £290.02 was recharged to other bodies. It was emphasized that this is the invoices paid in the 3 months period, and other invoices relating to the period were not included.

Items highlighted to or raised by members included:

- Item 2: £2,571.00 (net) to Association of Drainage Authorities for IDB Membership Subscription for 2020.

Members received and NOTED the expenditure incurred between 01.01.20 and 31.03.20.

### **2374 Financial Performance Outturn Report to 31<sup>st</sup> March, month 12 of 2019/20.**

The Director of Finance & Governance presented the Financial Performance Report, 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>2019/20 Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>FRS102 Adjusted</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Income	(895,200)	(1,259,088)	(363,888)	(1,259,088)
Board & General Admin	15,653	12,349	(3,304)	12,349
One Off Schemes	25,000	9,782	(15,218)	9,782
Conservation	1,750	992	(758)	992
Depot	12,456	21,231	8,775	21,231
Drains	339,392	346,871	7,479	346,871
Pumping Stations	185,331	379,913	194,582	379,913
Joint Services (Administration)	88,668	105,233	16,565	105,233
Joint Services (Engineering)	67,284	69,831	2,547	79,893
Consents & Enforcement	10,208	12,520	2,312	12,520
PWLB	29,766	29,152	(614)	29,152
Rechargeable Works	20,000	62,737	42,737	62,737
EA Precept	84,692	83,031	(1,661)	83,031
FRS17 Pension Adjustment (net)		0	0	(38,000)
Wages & Plant Holding Account	0	0	0	27,938
<b>Operating (Surplus)/ Deficit</b>	<b>(15,000)</b>	<b>(125,446)</b>	<b>(110,446)</b>	<b>(125,446)</b>
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	15,000	171,250	156,250	171,250
<b>Net (Surplus)/Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45,804</b>	<b>45,804</b>	<b>45,804</b>

The Board had ended the year with a deficit of £45.8k, which it is proposed be charged to the General reserve. Although a deficit, members felt this could have been more significant had the Statement of Claim to the EA not been paid and given the exceptionally wet Autumn 2019 and Winter 2020.

The main income streams in terms of Drainage Rates raised (not necessarily paid) and Special Levies had now been received in full. Drainage Rates collected for 2019/20, including previous years' arrears, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 stand at 100.0% (by comparison, 99.3% at month 12 2018/19). First reminders were despatched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 and final reminders were despatched on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019. Court was attended on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019. All historical outstanding rating queries were now resolved and only land issues and queries raised in-year were being actioned.

Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) works had been commissioned by the EA and completed where possible. Some were not completed due to the excessive wet weather in the Autumn. PSCA income amounted to (£41k) with other Rechargeable Works totalling (£29k), including some recharges between Boards.

Sundry Income includes the Statement of Claim income which was fully paid by the EA in March 2020 (£122k) with other sundry income of (£2k). Following the high rainfall events during Summer and Autumn 2019 which resulted in some flooding across Lincolnshire there were parts of the Witham & Humber Boards' systems that had to deal with water that had come from EA main rivers, whether due to bank breaches, overtopping and/or excessive seepage. This meant that some of the Board's pumps were pumping far more than would have been required without this additional water, which in turn meant excessive additional electricity costs [e.g. Farroway Pumping Station]. There were also additional costs incurred for direct requests for support by the EA to provide labour, plant and materials.

In order to mitigate some of these additional costs a Statement of Claim was prepared as at the end of December 2019 and submitted to the EA, outlining the additional costs incurred by the Boards for both the additional support provided and the additional electricity costs. A summary of the claim was included in the report, as follows:



<b>EA Statement of Claim January 2020</b>						
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
	<b>Direct Costs</b>	<b>Additional Electricity</b>	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>Existing Agreements</b>	<b>Not Funded</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>			
North East Lindsey IDB		£ 25,622.05	<b>£ 25,622.05</b>		£ 1,028.70	<b>£ 26,650.75</b>
Upper Witham IDB		£ -	<b>£ -</b>			<b>£ -</b>
Witham First District IDB	£ 42,342.22	£ 79,785.44	<b>£ 122,127.66</b>	£ 3,274.53		<b>£ 125,402.19</b>
Witham Third District IDB	£ 23,700.00	£ 36,233.38	<b>£ 59,933.38</b>			<b>£ 59,933.38</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 66,042.22</b>	<b>£ 141,640.87</b>	<b>£ 207,683.09</b>	<b>£ 3,274.53</b>	<b>£ 1,028.70</b>	<b>£ 211,986.32</b>

Highland Water claims have been paid by the Environment Agency for the balance of 2018/19 actual (£12,684) and for 80% (£14,400) of the 2019/20 estimated claim (£18,000). The balance adjusted for actual 2019/20 spend has been calculated and a further (£15,490) will be payable by the EA in September 2020. This is (£30k) above what was budgeted for.

FDGIA income (£163k) has been received in relation to the Metheringham Pumping Station scheme, which was not included in the budget. This scheme will be progressed in 2020/21. Therefore, this has been treated as a contribution to the 'One Off Schemes Reserve'. A drawdown of £6,750 has been made against this income, to offset the External Support costs incurred in producing the business case and grant applications during 2019/20.

The JCB JS160 had been traded in which achieved a net book surplus of (£8k), i.e. (£28k) sale value less (£20k) assumed residual values. A weed basket had also been sold, achieving £400 surplus (£800 sale value less £400 residual book value).

Electricity cost at pumping stations was £235k for the year, against an electricity budget of £56k, a £179k negative variance. Some of this, (£80k), was recouped via the Statement of Claim submitted to the EA and also a proportion (£4k) via the Highland Water claim. However, this was still a significant net cost to the Board.

Other variances include pump lifts £20k (Chapel Hill £18k, Nocton £11k and Sandhill £16k), surveys £3k, repairs & maintenance £3k, staffing £42k, offset by underspends on depreciation (£12k) and fuel (£8k).

The Bank Balances as at 31.03.20 were set out as follows:

Natwest	£ 301,230.19
Nationwide Instant Access	£ 234,676.33
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£ 535,906.52</u></b>

The Board's Public Works Loan Board loan was being repaid as follows, with £183,351.28 outstanding:

**2.41%**      **£ 183,351.28**

*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 outturn report for 2019/20. Members APPROVED the deficit of £45,804 be charged to the General reserve, noting this leaves a remaining General reserve balance of £87,505.

## **2375 Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.**

A copy of the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance and Governance.

The Annual Governance Statement [AGS] is incorporated into and forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20. The Board has a statutory requirement to complete and approve the AGAR.

The AGS part must be approved prior to the Accounting Statements, either at separate meetings or in the same meeting but with the correct order of business on the agenda, and this must be evidenced by the meeting minute references and/or dates.

The AGR comprises 9 assertions (number 9 is not applicable to IDBs) which the Board must consider and agree or provide a detailed explanation for the external auditor where it cannot agree and how it will address any weaknesses identified.

Once agreed, the Accounting Statements and overall AGAR can then be approved.

The Chairman took members through the relevant 8 statements and the response to each was agreed as positive.

Members duly:

1. completed the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2019/20
2. incorporated the completed AGS into the overall Annual Governance and Accountability Return [AGAR] 2019/20

## **2376 Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2019/20**

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

The Board does not have a statutory requirement to produce a full set of Statement of Accounts, but it is deemed good practice. Further, a lot of the detailed work undertaken is required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), which is a statutory requirement.

The accounts have been produced (where applicable) in accordance with the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England; A Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements, issued in March 2019.

The Statement of Accounts comprises the following key sections:

- Annual Report 2019/20 – narrative on the work of the Board during 2019/20.
- Statement of Accounts 2019/20 – lists the key components of the statements.
- Board Members – schedule of Board Members who served during 2019/20.
- The Annual Governance Statement – replication of the text in the Annual Report.
- Statement of Responsibilities – list the Board's and Chief Executive's responsibilities regarding the Statement of Accounts.
- Statement of Accounting Policies.
- Income & Expenditure Account 2019/20
- Balance Sheet 2019/20
- Notes to the Accounts.
- Appendices

- Map of Board drainage district
- Organisational Structure Chart
- Rainfall/Pump Use/Electricity data

Once approved, the document is loaded onto the Board's website to help meet its requirements under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. It was noted this document is not subject to audit, only the AGAR is subject to external audit.

Members were content to APPROVE the unaudited Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

### **2377 Unaudited IDB Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).**

A report prepared and presented by the Director of Finance and Governance had been circulated with the agenda.

The Board has a statutory requirement to complete and approve the AGAR.

The AGAR has 4 separate sections and normally must be approved at a full Board meeting before 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020, although due to the current Covid 19 pandemic, this date has been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. It also must be submitted, along with additional requested information, to the External Auditor by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 (extended until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020) for review. Alongside this, the rights of public inspection will also commence on Monday 06<sup>th</sup> July 2020 until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Normally, this has to incorporate the first 10 working days of July as required by statute, but this requirement has been removed for 2019/20 and now must be published on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

The AGAR comprises the following key sections:

- Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20
- Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20
- Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/2020
- Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20

The Annual Internal Audit Report has been completed by the Internal Auditor.

The Annual Governance Statement [AGS] was approved as a prior agenda item today.

Accounting Statements utilise the information used in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

Once approved, the AGAR document is published on the Board's website to meet its requirements under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The statutory deadline by which the AGAR and signed external auditor report and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit must be published is 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (usually 30<sup>th</sup> September).

Members were content to:

1. approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20
2. Publish the AGAR on the Board's website, along with the notice to commence the period of public rights from 06<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

### **2378 IDB1 2019/20 Annual Report.**

The completed IDB1 Annual Report to Defra had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Director of Finance and Governance.

The report must be completed, approved and submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> August each year to:

- Defra.
- Environment Agency.
- The Chief Executives of
  - All local authorities that pay special levies to the Board.
  - All County Councils or London Boroughs within which the Board is situated.

The form is in 3 sections covering:

- Financial information
  - Special Levies issued for 2020/21.
  - Income & expenditure Account for year ending 31 March 2020.
- IDB Reporting
  - Policy Delivery Statement.
  - Information on the National Flood and Coastal Defence Database.
  - Biodiversity.
  - Access to environmental expertise.
  - Asset Management.
  - Guidance and Best Practice
  - Board Membership and Attendance.
  - Complaints Procedure
- Declaration – to be signed by the Chief Executive.

Following discussion, Members were content to APPROVE the Defra Annual Report (IDB1) for the year ended 31 March 2020.

### **2379 Health and Safety Update.**

A Health and Safety update prepared by the Operations Manager had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Operations and Engineering.

The biggest issue faced since the last report had been the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The decision was taken by the Chief Executive and the Management Team, with the support of Chairmen, to have those that could work from home do so i.e. the Office based Staff. This also followed Government advice on lock down in the PM's announcement of 23.03.20.

Operatives, where able to abide by government guidelines, checked trouble spots, Pumping Stations and responded to any call outs on a rota system. They Lone Worked for the duration of their workday using the Buddy System we already had in place to keep in touch on an hourly basis. This also enabled us to keep all staff safe and have enough available should we have another flood event.

Risk Assessments and Method Statements have been completed for each step of the Pandemic and each change of Government advice. RA and MS were reviewed weekly at Management Meetings (held remotely via video conference).

The purchase of lidded bins for potentially hazardous waste (tissues, wipes etc), hand sanitiser, disposable gloves, tissues, anti-bacterial wipes and face masks had taken place

and items are available to all staff at each Depot and office. We also purchased additional hand tools, to avoid sharing of equipment.

On 18.05.20 the Operatives commenced full time days, again in line with national advice. They were provided with all the PPE described and travelled individually in their own vehicle. If working in a team of two they practise social distancing. The office staff are still working from home wherever possible, but measures have been put in place to make the office accessible to a limited number of staff at any one time (maximum of 4). The office is currently closed to members of the public and unauthorised visits, except by appointment.

There were no accidents and no near misses to report.

Due to the weather conditions in January the planned Health and Safety meeting with Health and Safety Reps was postponed and had yet to be scheduled.

All training courses had been postponed until training providers resumed business as usual.

The company fitting the Cab Hand Rails (arising from an accident on Upper Witham, previously reported) had yet to complete this task due to shutting down the factory and furloughing the staff. They had since reopened on reduced staffing levels and will resume as soon as they can.

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

### **2380 Environment Report.**

A report prepared by the Environment & GIS Technician, had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Operations and Engineering.

The IDBs had continued to work hard to achieve their duty to 'conserve and enhance the environment' in line with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC).

The Boards' Biodiversity Action Plans state that certain species should be recorded. These species have been identified as having significance within Lincolnshire and are species which would benefit from specific management or actions by the IDBs. The overall aim of monitoring these species is to ensure that habitat and species targets are translated into effective action within the Board districts.

ADA's Technical and Environment Committee is still awaiting guidance from DEFRA on the rewriting of IDB Biodiversity Action Plans in accordance with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. This has been delayed and is now due to be introduced in November 2020. In March 2020, the Great Lincolnshire Nature Partnership held a workshop for partners to help shape a new strategy for nature recovery across Great Lincolnshire which the 4 Boards' Environment & GIS Technician attended. The results of the workshop have been delayed due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and staff shortages at the GLNP, however these are expected soon.

Workforces for all Boards were introduced to a new recording system in late May 2019, in the form of a smartphone app called 'iRecord'. iRecord makes it easier for wildlife sightings to be collated and, most importantly, includes co-ordinates. These are imperative for displaying these on a GIS system and allows them to be accurately represented in wider biodiversity records. Periodically, the Boards' Environment & GIS Technician will log on to

each staff member's account and download the data. There has been very good feedback from the workforce, who find it much more convenient than using the old 'pen and paper' method. The Environment & GIS Technician presented the success of this app to other Board members and staff members at the ADA Lincolnshire Environment Committee in November 2019. It is hoped that other Boards in Lincolnshire can also see the benefit in using such a method, ensuring that Internal Drainage Boards in Lincolnshire can distinguish themselves in Lincolnshire species recording.

Compared to 2018/19, the owl box checks for 2019/20 were much more successful. 12 of the 29 boxes checked contained either barn owl (*Tyto alba*), kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) or both. The tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) box had three chicks, compared to one in 2018, and the adult female present. The little owl (*Athene noctua*) box had 4 chicks, compared to 2018's 3 surviving chicks and the adult female present. Only 3 of the 29 boxes checked were empty and all remaining boxes contained either feral pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*), stock dove (*Columba oenas*) or jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*).

The prize for 'most well-travelled barn owl' goes to an owl found in box 1524 (Digby Fen) for travelling an impressive 72km (44 miles) from where she was first ringed as a chick at Wicken Pond, Norfolk. For comparison, barn owls usually travel 1km when breeding and 4km when not.

The camera in Blankney PS box continues to work well and is monitored by officers. Three chicks were ringed at the box in 2019/20 and all fledged successfully.

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 PS enjoyed its first 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.

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.

Members received and noted the Environment Report.

### **2381 Director of Operations & Engineering Services' Report.**

The report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director.

- Coronavirus [Covid19 Virus]

Following the outbreak of Coronavirus [Covid19], the Government imposed movement restrictions for all except 'essential workers' on 24th March 2020. Following consultation with the Chairmen and officers, arrangements were put in place that ensured the core functions of the 4 Boards continued, whilst ensuring the safety of employees.

Prior to the restriction of movement being introduced, a regime of hand washing, and barrier protection was put in place at Witham House to protect the officers based there along with visitors to the building. Additional hygiene facilities were also provided to the Operatives along with measures such as no passengers in Boards' vehicles and social distancing. These measures were introduced to reduce the risk of infection.

With the imposition of essential journeys only on 24th March, the office at Witham House was closed to all but those who were required to undertake tasks that could not be completed at home. All members of staff were required to work from home. This required the purchase of additional ICT equipment, including laptops and mobile phones for those who did not already use them as part of their daily duties.

After lengthy discussion by the management team, it was decided to concentrate the activities to those activities that could be described as 'essential'. Whilst the Boards are classed within Lincolnshire as CAT 2 Responder, not all activities could be described as emergency work or essential in the current definition. Operational work on site was restricted to 3 priorities to ensure the continued operation of the Board maintained systems:

1. Pumping Stations: the Operatives were allocated a route covering pumping stations.
2. Weed screens, culverts and bridges; locations were identified as requiring regular inspection
3. Watercourses; those watercourses prone to obstruction from debris or recorded slips following the 2019 high rainfall events.

To reduce the risk of infection through cross contamination, individuals were assigned sites and locations. These locations were then inspected at regular intervals. Again, this routine of an individual having a site allocated to them reduced the risk of cross contamination. It was unclear as to how long the virus would remain live on hard surfaces, possibly up to 76 hours.

Should an emergency occur, then a specific risk assessment will be undertaken, and a clear method statement written, before any work is undertaken.

With the gradual easing of restrictions put in place by the Government, vegetation maintenance within maintained channels began on Monday 18th May. Following the risk assessment of the activities to be undertaken and the creation of suitable method statements, hand work, flailing and excavator weed cutting commenced on channels serving higher risk areas. These are predominantly residential areas.

Operatives were placed in teams of two with defined pieces of equipment and vehicles. Only tasks where social distancing requirements could be achieved were undertaken. Appropriate PPE was provided.

#### General Catchment Conditions

The 'monthly water situation report', generated by the Environment Agency, provides a factual description of catchment conditions. The rainfall total for March across England was 49mm, 74% of the long-term average and just over a quarter of that recorded for February [175mm]. Other indications that we have passed from saturated to very dry conditions are illustrated by the following data:

- i. Rainfall totals for the Steeping, Long Eau and Great Eau and South Forty Foot catchments were only 30% of the long-term average and classed as 'notably low'.
- ii. Despite this dry end to the year, the 6 month and 12-month cumulative rainfall totals for many catchments were classed as exceptionally, notably high.

- iii. Soil Moisture Deficits have varied between almost saturated at the start of March [SMD<10mm] to recording conditions classed as 'drier than average' at the end of the month.
- iv. River flows continue to be recorded at levels above normal, with the average recorded as 129% at Claypole weir on the River Witham upstream of Lincoln and 108% on the Barlings Eau at Langworth on the lower River Witham.
- v. Groundwater level in the central Limestone area are 'above normal' or 'exceptionally high' for the time of year

- Work Programmes

This period was to be used to complete 'winter work' programmes, usually a mixture of bushing, de-silting, slip repairs and repairs or maintenance of the various sites and equipment. Also, subject to the availability of contractors, the lifting of pumps and motors for their periodic maintenance. This was all delayed or postponed, but not cancelled.

The main element of work that was delayed because of the current restrictions was bank slip reinstatement. Following the high levels and flows experienced during the autumn and winter many slips occurred within the maintained systems. The locations of these, where reported, had been recorded and would be reinstated once close working could be undertaken safely. This type of work cannot be completed whilst complying with the requirement of maintaining a safe 'social distance' of 2m from work colleagues.

However, where the occurrence of slips may have obstructed the flow of water within the system, the material has been removed from the channel bed so that levels are not compromised.

- Planned Maintenance Programmes

The Summer Maintenance programme commenced somewhat earlier than in previous years, on 18th May, for several reasons:

- i. The inclusion of slip reinstatement within the usual maintenance programme
- ii. Restrictions caused by Covid19 regulations will slow down our normal rate of work completion and so an early start will reduce the risk of delays later in the year.

This requires the written recording of visual inspections of reaches to be cut for the presents of ground nesting birds and other protected species. Each reach is walked by the driver immediately prior to the length being cut to reduce the risk of damage to habitat and any nests that may be present.

- Farroway Pumping Station

Inspection of pumps and motors at this station has been undertaken. The motor serving Anwick Fen gave cause for concern following heavy use over the autumn of 2019. It is planned to remove this pump and motor for refurbishment as part of the planned programme of refurbishment. It was last refurbished in 2011.

- Digby Fen

Queen Dyke, EA Main River, has been a source of several chronic issues for the Board. New Cut Drain had been overtopping into the Queen Dyke for several months, but this ceased in February with the reduction of rainfall and subsequent fall in levels. Discussions have been had with the EA regarding their approach to remedy the situation and complaints received from local landowners/occupiers. These will continue.



The left-hand embankment of Queen Dyke [from its confluence with Dorrington Drain upstream to Fen Road bridge] is being reinstated to a regular profile and has been fitted with galvanised steel mesh to prevent further damage by badgers. This work extends for some 400 – 500m.

- Chapel Hill & North Kyme Fen

The collapse of the road culvert at the junction of the A153 with Twenty Foot Bank road has resulted in the temporary road closure being put in place and temporary works by Lincolnshire County Council Highways Authority, who will be undertaking the rebuilding of their culvert structure.

Several slips have been cleared to ensure the free passage of water within the channel at normal levels. Subject to the lifting or alteration of Covid19 restrictions, these will either be reinstated as specific jobs ahead of the maintenance season or will be reinstated as the machine passes the location during the summer months.

- Sandhill PS

Work to provide an early cut to the Longstone and Canwick Fen Drains had to be postponed on 26 May. To reduce the risk of damage to ground nesting bird habitat, and the birds themselves, an inspection prior to the work commencing was undertaken. It was found that the vegetation was heavily populated by nesting birds and the risk of bird strikes and prosecution was high. The work is now programmed for August/September.

Work to reinstate the raised embankment of Sandhill Beck [EA main river] was programmed to commence on 02nd June. This work was to be undertaken by Jackson Civil Engineering Ltd. on behalf of the EA. The Board had been notified of the works and agreed site arrangements. During the November 2019 rainfall events, the landward face of the raised embankment failed and temporary protection consisting of sandbags and plastic sheeting was put in place as a temporary measure. This work is to effect a permanent repair of the defence.

- Plant

The delivery of the new Atlas 150W wheeled excavator was due imminently. It was delivered to the TDL's depot at Barnsley in May to allow for pre-delivery inspections and testing to be completed and the final fitting of additional items specified by the Board. The 'sliding-dipper' attachment was manufactured by Mastenbroek Ltd of Boston and supplied to TDL. The purchase price of this machine will be £187,150 and is part of the Board's approved plant replacement programme 2020/21.

- Environment Agency

#### Public Service Cooperation Agreement [PSCA]

Confirmation from the EA to begin work on the 2020/21 programme of work was received by the Boards on 13th May, including the cutting of embankment tops to ensure the safe operation of plant later in the year.

The total value of work estimated for each Board is:

<b>Witham First DIDB</b>	<b>£ 65,022.00</b>
Witham Third DIDB	£337,540.00
Upper Witham IDB	£ 95,496.00
North East Lindsey DB	£126,803.00

These estimates included items for the cost of supervision and administration of the work and a contingency sum of 10% to allow for compliance with any regulations relating to Covid19.

Much of the programme requested is like that in previous years, except for that in Witham Third District. Witham Third has been requested to take on 2 large additional watercourses, the Barlings Eau and River Bain/Horncastle Canal. Both watercourses have been the case of many complaints to the Board over many years.

This work will be completed, in addition to the core maintenance programme, with Witham Third DIB's retention of its Volvo long reach excavator and the employment of a sub-contractor to undertake the hand work relating to these watercourses.

All work is completed on a full cost recovery basis.

- Lower River Witham Strategy Review

A conference call was attended on 5 June where a brief update on the Strategy review was given. 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. Consulting engineers, Arup, have been appointed to undertake the strategy review. Their work is to include the management of the topographical survey work, model update, stakeholder engagement and development of the business case document by 2022.

The strategy, which was originally produced in the late 1990s and resulted in the rebuilding of many kilometres of raised earth embankments in the early 2000s, 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.

Any further 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.

### **2382 Engineering Services Report.**

The Engineering Services Report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Engineering Services Officer.

There were no issues to highlight to members on this occasion.

Members received and noted the Engineering Services report.

### **2383 Consents and Enforcements**

A Consents and Enforcements report had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Engineering Services Officer. Cases were summarised as follows:

#### **Byelaw Consent Applications**

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Date</b>
FD-5009-2020-CON	Skirth Road, Billinghamay / Billinghamay Soke Dyke	Mr P Marshall	Attenuated discharge from 5no. dwellings	20-03-20
FD-5045-2020-CON	Red House Bridge Martin / Mill Drain	Lincolnshire County Council	Construction of end revetments	21-02-20

FD-5046-2020-CON	Fox's Drain / Horseshoe Drain, Potterhanworth Fen	F G Battle & Sons Ltd	Underdrainage outfalls: 13no. and 9no. respectively	24-02-20
FD-5161-2020-CON	Land off Station Road, Digby	Stonewall Homes Ltd	2no. free discharges to new flood relief channel from 17no. dwellings	01-05-20

### Section 23 Land Drainage Act Consent Applications – District

Reference	Location	Applicant	Details	Date
FD-5182-2020-CON	Witham Bank, Martin Dales	Frances Roxburgh	Underdrainage to horse paddock	18-05-20

### Section 23 Land Drainage Act Consent Applications – Extended Area

The Board acts as Agent for Lincolnshire County Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority.

Reference	Location	Applicant	Details	Date
FE-4852-2019-CON	Washdyke Lane, Leasingham	Mr & Mrs P M Brown	12m long culvert to protect dwelling	13-02-20
FE-5049-2020-CON	Brookside, Scopwick / Scopwick Beck	Lincolnshire County Council	2no. outfalls from 3no. highway gullies	26-02-20
FE-5080-2020-CON	Old Hall Farm, Roxholme	Beeswax Dyson Farming Ltd	15m long, 1.5m dia farm access culvert	27-02-20

### 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	Leasingham beck field	Issue with watercourse	Suggested course of action awaiting response.
FD-4612-2019-ENF	Billingham South Soke Dyke. Tattershall	Unconsented bridge	Bridge removed. Case Closed 9/6/20
FD-4927-2019-ENF	Electric Station Road, Sleaford	Flooding in garden	Awaiting investigation

### Enforcement Issues – Extended Area

Reference	Location	Description /Comments	Actions
FE-3913-2018-ENF	A607 & Mill Lane	Flooding of road	Awaiting maintenance work on watercourses
FE-4525-2019-ENF	Fen Road Billingham	Possible maintenance to watercourse	Monitoring condition
FE-4907-2019-ENF	Ford Church Lane Kirkby Green	Height of water in ford	Monitoring condition
FE-4961-2019-ENF	Fen Road Ruskington	Flooding	Awaiting maintenance of EA main river
FE-4972-2019-ENF	Papermill Lane, Evedon	Unconsented culvert	Awaiting response
FE-5000-2020-ENF	Highfield Station Road, Potterhanworth	Unconsented watercourse filled in	Awaiting confirmation it has been removed
FE-5036-2020-ENF	Walnut House, Timberland	Filling in of watercourse	Awaiting investigation
FE-5101-2020-ENF	Potterhanworth Road, Heighington	Highway flooding	Awaiting investigation

Members received and noted the report on Consents and Enforcements.

**2384 Metheringham Fen Pumping Station Refurbishment Scheme.**

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was introduced by the Engineering Services Officer.

Grant in Aid funding has been applied for and received for the financial year 2020/2021. The scheme includes a new Control Panel, refurbishment to the Automatic Weedscreen Cleaner, and general works. The Board benefited from the services of Nicola McGarry working in the post created using funding from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) to aid the Lincolnshire IDBs to apply for Grant in Aid funding. Of the overall scheme cost of £168,000, £163,000 has been received as Grant in Aid and the Board contribution is £5,000.

Metheringham pumping Station is located 17km South East of Lincoln and discharges into the EA River Witham through the South bank between Bardney and Woodhall Spa. Metheringham Pumping Station drains Metheringham and Dunston Fens between Nocton and Metheringham Delphs. The catchment has an area of 1448 hectares, containing 56 properties and agricultural land. The current twin electric pumping station was constructed in 1989, using the Engineering services of Upper Witham Internal Drainage Board, replacing an older electric station.

The electrical control panels have reached the end of serviceable life. Without replacement the station will become prone to faults and failures, therefore increasing flood risk to the catchment. The existing Automatic Weedscreen Cleaner also requires refurbishment. In addition, the station will fail to comply with the current regulations. The flap valves into the River Witham require refurbishment. They have worn and are at risk of the pins/bushes failing. Several Health and Safety issues have also been identified.

The Board's required contribution of £5k can as agreed earlier in the meeting be met from the Pumping Station Renewal Fund, which currently has an uncommitted balance of £50k.

The intention was to undertake the works on a competitive tendering basis when circumstances allow, given current restrictions.

Members noted the update report and APPROVED the use of up to £5k from the Pumping Station Renewal Fund to meet the Board's contribution to the scheme.

**2385 Any Other Business.**

There were no further items of business and the meeting closed at 16:20.

**2386 Date, Time and Place of the Board's Next Meeting.**

The Board's next meeting was confirmed for Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 at 2pm, venue and format TBC.

..... Chairman ..... Date  
W1st BM 30.06.20