

UPPER WITHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of Upper Witham Internal Drainage Board held on Monday, 27th November 2023 in Witham House Boardroom, North Hykeham, Lincoln at 2pm.

Present:

Cllr D Armiger	
Mr T Arnold	via video conference
Mr A Buckley	
Cllr B Bushell	via video conference
Cllr L Bushell	via video conference
Cllr R Cozens	
Cllr M Green	
Cllr G Hewson	
Mr J R Hollis	
Mr E Jackson	
Mr P Knight	
Cllr R Longbottom	
Cllr R Metcalfe	
Mr F Myers	
Cllr D Nannestad	
Cllr L Pennell	
Mr R Phillips	
Mr G Rawlings	
Cllr L Sanders	
Mr J Scarborough	
Mr W Timmins	
Mr N Tobin	
Cllr P Vaughan	
Mrs J Wilkinson	

In Attendance:

- Mr Ian Coupland, Director of Operations.
- Miss Jayne Flower, Executive Assistant.
- Mrs Jane Froggatt, Chief Executive.
- Mr Steve Larter, Director of Finance & Governance.
- Mr Martin Shilling, Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

25.23 Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Baker, Cllr P Ellis, Ms E Jenkinson, Cllr P Morris, Cllr I Stokes and Cllr C Watt.

26.23 Declarations of Members' Interests.

Members appointed by each of the relevant five Councils declared interests relating to those Councils (City of Lincoln, North Kesteven District, West Lindsey District, South Kesteven District and Newark & Sherwood District Councils).

27.23 Election of Chairman

This being the Annual Public Meeting for 2023, nominations were sought for the role of Chairman. Mr Fred Myers was nominated, seconded and there being no further nominations, he was duly elected for the forthcoming year.

28.23 Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the November Annual Public Meeting and thanked members for electing him once again as Chairman.

He advised that there was much business today and therefore the usual agenda had been slightly revised to accommodate a presentation and discussion on Storm Babet, whilst undertaking the necessary Governance duties of election of Chairman, Vice Chairman and members to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and various committees.

The Chairman welcomed new members nominated by the 5 Special Levy paying councils, as follows:

Cllr John Cottier of SKDC is replaced by **CLLR RHYS BAKER.**

Cllr Linda Dales of N&SDC is replaced by **CLLR ROWAN COUZENS.**

Chris Burke of City of Lincoln Council is replaced by **CLLR LIZ BUSHELL.**

Cllr Stephen Roe of NKDC is replaced by **Cllr LEIGH SANDERS**

The Chairman put on record his thanks to outgoing Councillors for their contributions to the Board's work.

It was with regret that the Chairman reported that former Board member **Cllr Rosemary Kaberry-Brown** died on 03rd August 2023. Rosemary had been an Upper Witham Board member nominated by SKDC since 2015, only standing down in May 2023 due to ill-health.

In announcing Rosemary's death, the Chairman of South Kesteven District Council, Cllr Gloria Johnson, had said:

"Rosemary was one of our longest-serving members of the Council when she stood down in May 2023 and although she had experienced recent poor health her death was a shock to us all.

She served with the Council for almost 20 years, representing Peascliffe & Ridgeway Ward, and her passing is a great loss to South Kesteven. She will be missed for the contribution she made. Rosemary was chairman here in 2012-13, She was Vice-Chairman of the Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 2017 to 2019 and a member of the Planning and Licensing Committees. Her dedication to the community she served will be missed. She had also served as the long-time agent of Douglas Hogg, MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham, from 1981 to 2010".

Rosemary's funeral took place on Tuesday, 29th August at St Wulfram's Church in Grantham. Ray Phillips, former Chairman and Board member, represented the Board at the service.

The Chairman with regret also advised members of the death of Mr James Grant on Friday, 09th November after a short illness. Many knew James as a long-serving member of neighbouring Witham Fourth District IDB and the Chairman of that Board

for 16 years between 2002 and 2018. James was well known for his contribution to the IDB sector and the work of ADA, both locally in Lincolnshire and nationally.

Members stood for a minute's silence, to pay respects and to remember those two lives well-lived.

The Chairman reminded Members that had not already done so, to please confirm with Jayne Flower attendance at the Members' Training Day at Whisby to be held on Tuesday 05th December 2023.

29.23 Election of 2 Vice Chairmen

Cllr Pat Vaughan and Mr John Scarborough were both nominated, seconded and, there being no further nominations, re-elected as the two Vice Chairmen for the ensuing year.

30.23 Election of up to 12 members to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The current 8 Members, being the Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Cllr D Nannestad, Cllr L Pennell, Mr R Phillips, Cllr I Stokes and Mrs J Wilkinson were re-elected en-bloc to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

31.23 Election of up to 6 members to the Works Committee.

The current 3 members, being the Chairman, Vice Chairmen were re-elected en-bloc with the 3 vacant seats agreed to be co-opted to cover the issue concerned as and when required.

32.23 Election of Representative to ADA Lincs Branch Environment Committee.

It was agreed that this would again be an open position, no nominations being received.

33.23 Election of Representative to ADA Lincs Branch Pay & Conditions Committee.

Cllr Lance Pennell confirmed he was willing to stand and there being no further nominations, he was duly re-elected.

34.23 Election of 4 Members to the Joint Services Committee.

The current members, being the Chairman, Vice Chairmen and Cllr D Nannestad, were re-elected en-bloc to the JSC.

35.23 Calendar of Meeting Dates 2024.

Members approved the dates for the Board meetings and Committee meetings as follows:

Upper Witham Board Meetings (Witham House Boardroom, Meadow Lane, North Hykeham at 2pm):

- Monday, 29th January
- Monday, 20th May.
- Monday, 25th November (+APM).

Upper Witham Finance & General Purposes Committee Meetings (Witham House Boardroom, Meadow Lane, North Hykeham at 10am):

- Wednesday, 17th January.
- Wednesday, 08th May.
- Wednesday, 13th November

Joint Services Committee Meetings (at 10am, Witham House, Meadow Lane):

- Monday, 13th May.
- Monday, 15th July.
- Monday, 09th December.

Annual Inspection 2024

- Thursday, 26th September.

36.23 Register of Member's Interests

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct Members were asked to complete the annual update of the Register of Members' Interests and hand forms to Jayne Flower at the end of the meeting or submit to them to Witham House later.

37.23 Minutes of the previous Board Meeting, 22.05.23.

The Minutes of the Board's meeting held on Monday, 22nd May 2023 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed, seconded and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

37.23.1 Pyewipe Pumping Station (Minute 4.23.2 refers).

Members were reminded that works to refurbish the Board's pumping station commenced on 11th October 2022, with excavations for the foundation of the new control house.

Several issues at this site were being worked through, including use of the Board's access track and apparent disruption to the Canal & River Trust's licensed residents of moorings [who use the track on a regular basis, but whose designated parking is at the entry to the track]. Contact with the Canal and River Trust continued to be somewhat problematic. City of Lincoln Councillor and Board Member Cllr Gary Hewson had been in communication with residents and Officers and was being briefed on the position.

37.23.2 Railway footpath level crossings to Pyewipe Pumping Station (Minute 4.23.3 refers).

The Chief Executive highlighted to members that works on Network Rail's land, by Network Rail's contractors, to effect necessary tree and bushing works to improve access along the Board's access track to the pumping station had been halted at the request of the Canal & Rivers Trust. The Board had requested that these works be completed as a prerequisite to surrendering the historical footpath access route the Board holds across the live railway line.

Members were reminded that at the November 2021 meeting the Board agreed to accept Network Rail's offer to pay the Board £5,000 compensation and professional fees of £2,000 to relinquish the historical access route of 2 footpath crossings. The agreement was therefore currently on hold with the Board's solicitor, awaiting confirmation that the necessary tree and bushing works are completed to the Board's satisfaction.

In the meantime, repeated requests to meet representatives of the Canal & Rivers Trust had been unsuccessful.

37.23.3 Electricity (minute 7.23.3 refers)

As previously briefed, Members were reminded that the electricity cost pressure IDBs face had been raised with Defra officials. The Chief Executive attended the Defra/ADA/EA/IDB representatives' meeting last year on 30.11.22, MPs were briefed, furthermore the Chief Executive had presented the position at the Anglian [Northern] RFCC meeting on 27.01.23 immediately after the 4 Boards' January meetings. The position was outlined by Andrew McGill and the Chief Executive to the Lincolnshire Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20.02.23. Letters were sent to MPs, Councils had been briefed and escalated the issue, and the impact on the Special Levies they pay, with DLUC. But IDBs had to set budgets based on predicted electricity costs and usage for an average rainfall year in 2023/24, and the risk sits entirely with the IDBs.

The Chief Executive previously reported the good news for Special Levy paying councils. The Government had announced on 16.05.23 that the 15 Councils most affected by increases in Special Levy increases for 2023/24 would be allocated a one-off sum of £3 million to offset the impact on them of rises in IDB Special Levies.

Members were relieved that some additional national funding had been forthcoming to councils [all 5 relevant to Upper Witham benefit], albeit for 2023/24 only.

Members would be updated on electricity costs during the meeting.

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

38.23 Minutes of the Joint Services Committee Meeting, 17.07.23.

The minutes of the Joint Services Committee held on Monday 17th July 2023 had been circulated with the agenda for noting. There were no matters arising, all items being covered by the agenda.

39.23 Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, 08.11.23.

The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday, 08th November 2023 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed, seconded and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

There were no matters arising and Members received and noted the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting.

40.23 Chief Executive's Report.

The Chief Executive's report had been circulated with the agenda. Issues highlighted included:

40.23.1 Storm Babet 20.10.23.

Storm Babet was a significant event, with 2.5 months' worth of rain falling in one night. Some of the issues raised included seven known breaches in main rivers in Lincolnshire and many sites of bank overtopping and significant bank seepage.

Although all 4 drainage districts were affected, with localised flooding in many locations (e.g., Westborough in UW, Brant Broughton in UW, Digby in W1st, Brant Road in Lincoln [UW], Horncastle in W3rd) the Boards' systems and assets were particularly hit hard in Witham Third DIDB and Witham First DIDB districts.

A presentation of the Storm Babet event and impacts will be available at each Board's meeting, illustrating the impact on catchments and to facilitate discussion.

The Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) convened 20.10.23 and the Strategic Command Group (SCG), Tactical Command Group (TCG) and supporting Pump Cell met daily, sometimes more frequently, for a couple of weeks. No emergency was declared, but a major incident was declared in relation to the River Witham bank slump at Fiskerton [to which W3rd responded with its 3 pumping stations at Short Ferry, Fiskerton Diesels and Greetwell evacuating water at 6,600 litres per second for 24/7 over the last couple of weeks to reduce the flood cell water level where 81 residential properties were at risk of flooding]. There was good cooperation with IDB and EA staff operationally, and the Lincolnshire LRF across agencies during the Storm Babet event.

In summary, the event has caused more damaging impacts to two of the Boards' assets than the series of rainfall events in 2019/20. The Boards are still dealing with the impact and the full recovery costs and additional pumping costs are not yet known. These costs will be collated, as known.

The 4 Witham & Humber Drainage Boards' Chairmen had collectively written to Mr Eddy Poll, Chairman of the Anglian [Northern] RFCC to advise of the severe impact, to highlight that there is no national or local funding mechanism for the IDBs to use for necessary recovery works and to meet third-party excess water pumping electricity costs. A similar approach was being taken by other IDBs, including W4th.

40.23.2 Pay Award 2023/24

On Thursday 21st September Lance Pennell and I attended the Lincolnshire ADA Branch's Pay & Conditions Committee meeting. Employers and staff side representatives Unison reached agreement on a proposed pay settlement for 2024/25 from 01st April 2024.

This is a consolidation of £1,130 [of the 2023/24 unconsolidated hardship sum of £1,800] as stage 1 and then, as stage 2, 6.45% applied to the new baseline. This 6.45% is in keeping with the pay formula used previously [of 12 months rolling average change in public sector Average Weekly Earnings July 2022-July 2023, as published in September].

Both parties sought ratification of the proposed pay settlement proposal for 2024/25. Unison Lincolnshire IDB Branch put the proposal to their members, those employed only by the 7 relevant IDBs, and undertook to respond to Employers with a yes/no result before 19.10.23. Employers put it for ratification to the ADA Lincolnshire Branch meeting on 19th October 2023.

The pay claim presented initially by Unison was for 11% [being 9% RPI related, and 2% catch-up inflation claim]. Employers rejected the pay claim and counter-offered a deal of consolidation of £1,000 + 6.45%, this offer was rejected by Unison.

Unison then submitted a counterclaim for £1,130 + 6.45% [an impact which increases the LDO role salary on SP15 by 11.06%, increasing the salary from £26,376 in 2023/24 to £29,292 in 2024/25]. This was accepted as a fair and reasonable compromise which meets a key pay objective of narrowing pay differentials within IDBs and gives a larger proportionate pay increase to those staff on lower pay scales.

Unison committed to come back before 19.10.23 and ADA Lincolnshire Branch for employers met on 19.10.23, in time to take the proposed pay settlement to November Board meetings.

As a reminder, the £1,800 paid as an unconsolidated hardship sum in 2023/24 is in our W&HDB baseline revenue budgets. This is therefore already in our baseline to offset the cost impact of the £1,130 consolidated sum element as is therefore part of the 6.45%. So, for employers presentation-wise we have a deal which is fair to staff, narrows internal IDB pay differentials in line with a key pay objective and which in our budget setting for 24/25 will hopefully be palatable to Drainage Rate payers and Special Levy Paying Councils [after high Penny.Rate increases of 15% in 3 Boards and 29% in W1st for 2023/24].

On Tuesday 17th October we received notification of a clear Unison ballot result of YES for the proposed 2024/25 pay settlement from 01st April [consolidation of £1,130 of the £1,800 23/24 lump sum + 6.45%, that % being the 12-months average of the AWE for the public sector July 22 to July 23, as published 12.09.23]. The proposed settlement with staff-side endorsement went to the ADA Lincolnshire Branch where it was endorsed

and adopted as the recommended pay settlement for 2024/25 on 19.10.23. It now comes to the November Board meetings for each Board to formally adopt the settlement.

Members APPROVED the recommended ADA Lincolnshire Branch pay settlement for 2024/25, from 01st April 2024, as set out.

The Chief Executive placed on record her thanks to Cllr Lance Pennell, who serves on the ADA Lincolnshire Branch's Pay & Conditions Committee as the 4 Boards' representative. Lance has indicated his willingness to serve on the Committee for a further year, if asked to do so at the November APMs, but should another member be interested in taking the role from November 2024, then he and/or I would welcome expressions of interest.

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

41.23 Storm Babet Event, Friday 20th October 2023 onwards.

A presentation was given to Members by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services, along with contributions from colleagues. Members took part in a lengthy discussion.

Upper Witham District had experienced flooding on the same scale as Witham First and Witham Third districts. There were, however, some localities within the district which had suffered severe flooding, e.g., Westborough and Brant Broughton. The Board's pumping station assets and watercourses had not been inundated significantly, as had been the case in those 2 IDBs. The pumping stations had operated for more than usual, reflected in higher pumped hours and electricity costs.

An example of pumping hours at local Pumping Stations was given, comparing the months of September and October to illustrate the difference in water levels and rainfall received.

Pumped Hours		
PS	23-Sep	23-Oct
Boultham	29	260
Pyewipe	10	223
Oxpasture	15	304
Torksey Syke	1	215
Thorpe	8	131

This demonstrated the constant use of the PS to move huge volumes of water being pumped during October and showed a stark contrast to the previous month of September.

There was an explanation of the Environment Agency flood alert system and discussion followed. Eliot Jackson asked if the alert system was working correctly because in his location of Westborough that was perhaps the worst affected within UW, no alerts were received.

Roger Hollis commented that within his area of Brant Broughton it was the worst he had experienced since 1958 when the River Brant was just a small dyke. 7 properties had been flooded and he had 3 concerns:

- The stretch of the Brant to Welbourn Road to the EA horseshoes had received no maintenance except to the mowing of the bank top. It was in poor condition. Could the Board adopt this stretch of the watercourse in future? Ian Coupland commented that this had previously been raised with the EA as part of PSCA works.
- The timing of the operation of the Lincoln Aubourn Washlands was an issue. The Till Washlands was operational from midday on Friday 20th October, but Aubourn was at least 12 hours later. He had viewed the area on Saturday morning and only 2 gates were open, the third was not. On Tuesday morning [24th] he observed the EA working on it which suggests it was out of order, can this be confirmed? The Till Washlands were 70% full and in his opinion the Aubourn washlands were only 32% full.
- He asked if there were any gauging stations in Welbourn Road and would this have had any impact on the flow of water because it is a weir. Martin Shilling stated that the channel was designed to pass so much water and the gauge was designed to allow and measure all levels without getting in the way.

Andrew Buckley commented that he was frustrated at going around in circles. The EA were not communicating and the NFU were looking at cases from a potentially legal point of view. He asked if there was anything that ADA could do to force the EA to engage and move to action? He felt that the only option left was for legal action against the EA to take place.

Jane Froggatt suggested that it apparently came down to interpretation of policy, priorities and use of available funding. The system within which the EA staff work needs modification.

The degree of members' desired main river maintenance is clearly not happening, and all the other functions of the EA do seem to mean that the conveyance of water is not a priority was the feeling of the meeting. The gearing of funding is towards new capital schemes rather than planned, preventative maintenance. A lot of the main river systems are low consequence for the EA because they impact upon agricultural land rather than high numbers of residential properties.

John Scarborough advised members that a couple of structures on Boultham Catchwater were waiting to fall into the watercourse and asked if the EA were aware and acting on this? It was confirmed that the EA are aware of the issue.

Members received, discussed and noted the presentation and current position.

42.23 Operations Report.

An operations report, including the Health and Safety update had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Operations.

There had been 7 reported incidents across all the Boards, including 1 near miss incident in UW. This was a Near Miss Traffic Collision as a staff member left the premises at Witham House, pulling on to the public highway.

Members were advised that all Health and Safety measures had taken place during the response to Storm Babet.

For the Non-operational staff who took calls and replied to emails over the weekends, they were able to work from home to reduce the need to travel in the worst of the weather. Where possible, and where appropriate training has been received, cover to the LRF multi-agency meetings was completed over the weekends, and then shared during the week to provide cover but also to allow daily duties to be undertaken. Black Sluice IDB initially provided TCG cover, then Witham & Humber Internal Drainage Boards (W&HDBs) with the Chief Executives of the Lincolnshire IDBs providing SCG cover to the meetings over several weeks. As the W&HDB districts suffered a greater flooding impact compared to some of the other Lincolnshire IDBs, a pumping cell was set up with representation from the W&HDBs present throughout. This was Operational and Engineering staff fielding the meetings, due to the tactical level of detail required.

Operational staff provided 24/7 cover at Pumping Stations to monitor and keep the diesel pumps working, and to provide cover to those pumping stations which were pushed to their limits, with panels tripping out and needing to be manually restarted immediately to prevent backing up of flood waters.

To facilitate the 24/7 cover, Operational teams were split into pairs to ensure 2 staff were at the pump station at a time, to support lone working in a heightened response phase, particularly during nighttime working, with teams being 'stood down' during daylight hours to obtain suitable rest. Managing and covering diesel pumps is labour intensive, and 2 staff members, with 3 shifts required 6 operational team members in each 24-hour period.

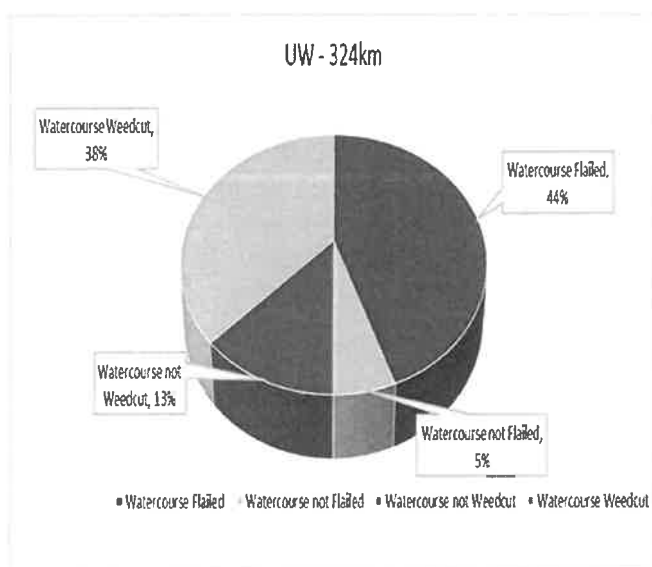
As the heavy rainfall event with Storm Babet was anticipated a few days prior to it hitting Lincolnshire, it was possible to proactively put Health and Safety controls in place. These included (list may not be exhaustive):

- Ensuring that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in place and was in a suitable state of repair.
- Life Jackets were in vehicles/to hand and worn.
- Torches and lights have been provided to all Operatives, and it is their responsibility to report any missing or damaged equipment to allow for suitable replacements or repairs to be undertaken.
- Operational activities are where possible completed in pairs, due to the increased risk during events.
- Where farm tracks are to be used and it is reasonable to expect water levels to rise in watercourses, and potentially affect visibility on tracks, stakes are used to mark out the edges of the tracks, so that team members can see where the edge of the track is /edge of watercourse is.
- Should walking/wading in low level flood waters be required, in addition to the PPE, sticks are used to allow operatives to 'feel' for any uneven ground and or any areas where ground furniture has been raised e.g., manhole covers.
- Use of UW Board's boats was kept to a minimum, only used to transport grease and equipment to inaccessible pumping stations, by trained Operatives [e.g., W1st's Sandhill PS].

As with all flood events, following the response phase, feedback will be collated to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our teams.

Ian Coupland pointed out to Members that he had on more than one occasion had cause to advise members of the public not to walk on flood banks during flood events. Shockingly, Parish Flood Wardens had contacted him during the night, in the dark while out walking on their own in search of bank slips. They were immediately advised to return to a place of safety.

July saw the start of the annual flailing and weed cutting maintenance programme. It had proved to be a very challenging season, with the late and sporadic harvest and the weather, followed by Storm Babet. Across the group other challenges were also experienced this year, including unfilled vacancies, long term illness absence, and Operatives having to take time to care for seriously ill family members. Even with all these issues and pressures, three of the four Boards would have finished the vegetation maintenance by Christmas 2023 and the Fourth Board [Witham First DIDB] by late January 2024, until Storm Babet impacted.



We have been a van down on upper Witham but have been holding off the purchase until we had interviewed for the LDO role. We have now purchased a used van at a cost of **£5,500.00**.

The wheeled excavator, 150 model, had been vandalised and had the computer and entire dashboard stolen, which is essentially the brains of the machine. The cost of this repair is estimated to be between £5k and £10k.

Burton Weed screen is still ongoing, this work was due to be started once we dropped back to winter levels in the drain, but we had no sooner got to winter levels than the storms started. As and when we return to a form of normal service levels, we will get this completed.

At Saxilby Pumping Station the discharge pipe is still awaiting repair, a problem having been found with the pipe. However, the pump is still serviceable and in use. Perry's pumps have been and assessed the condition and have recommended a way forward. This repair is being discussed as part of the FDGIA grant for this station's refurbishment.

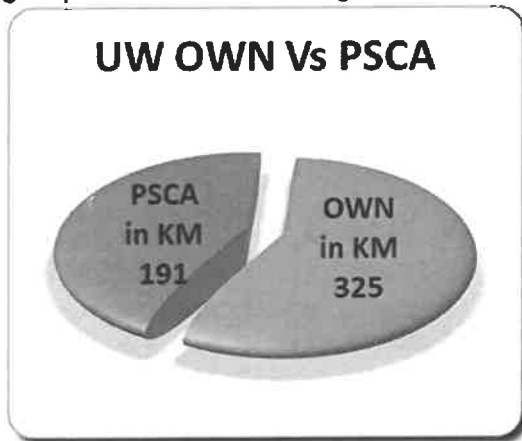
A motor at Boultham Pumping Station had a slip ring failure this was removed by the pump team and taken to Rundles who turned it round while we waited, it was back up and running in a day.

The bank slip repair reported at Tillbridge Lane has not yet been repaired, the engineering team have come up with a design solution and this will be undertaken when the annual reforming programme commences in the early part of the new year. We will be culverting the short section that has slipped. However, the caveat being that all planned works may be affected by needing to prioritise bank slip repairs for water conveyance.

Quotes given to the EA for PSCA works were as follows: NEL **£169,670.89**, UW **£200,944.02**, W1 **£124,071.49** and W3 **£306,668.35** [the actual/recovery costs of completed works may differ].

These works and income levels will not be reached this year, due to the extreme weather and not being able to access the banks.

We have already quoted for some Winter bushing maintenance across the W&HDBs group and have a meeting booked with the EA to discuss the possibility of more work.



UW have quoted for bushing works for Cargill Seeds @ an estimated £48,000.00 + VAT. Once we know whether these additional works have been commissioned, we can plan the delivery of the works in terms of Operatives and plant.

The priority remains to complete the 4 Boards' own work on adopted & scheduled watercourses, as funded by drainage rate payers and Special Levy paying Councils.

Discussion took place as to whether it is possible to make pumping stations waterproof/more resilient to flooding. It was confirmed that most have submersible pumps however the water rises through the pump chamber. Martin Shilling commented that they were all designed 50 years or more previously and were not equipped for the changing rainfall patterns, or to cope with the water from main river breaches that are being experienced.

Members received and NOTED the Operations report and update.

Mr Ray Phillips left the meeting.

43.23 Engineering Report.

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

Western Growth Corridor, WGC (UD-128-2013-PLN) (UD-4618-2019-PLN)

At the Board meeting in June 2013 the Board confirmed its objection in principle to the development within flood plain. However, it was agreed that Officers would continue to co-operate and take part in multi-agency meetings to safeguard the Board's interests and minimise the impact on the pumped drainage system maintained by the Board.

Enabling works for the WGC development began in June 2023 with the work to alter the road junction access on to Skellingthorpe Road beginning and programmed to take 12 months. Discussions have taken place to agree the route of the Board's access, so that maintenance of the main drainage channels through the site is not obstructed throughout the entire construction period of some 23 years.

Other discussions have taken place with consultant engineers to clarify the Board's requirements regarding the route and layout of the main drainage channels, and importantly their outfalls into the Skellingthorpe Pump Drain and Boutham Pump Drain.

During the early hours of the 20th October high rainfall event, it was reported that the contractor's temporary works on the Boutham Catchwater Drain [EA main river] had caused a breach in the defences. This breach/overlapping resulted in the flooding of land adjacent to the Catchwater Drain. The contractor and their client attended site to put in place remedial works and stem the breach.

A progress meeting between the Board's officers, the EA and Lindum is planned for early December.

At the appropriate time, Lindum will give a presentation to a Board meeting.

North Hykeham Relief Road, NHRR (Southern Bypass Link) (UD-3579-2017-PLN)

This is a proposed new highway (from the A46 to the A15) to complete the Bypass around Lincoln. Meetings have been held with Lincolnshire County Council's consultant engineers, who are designing the road and the associated structures. These meetings have discussed the arrangements required by the Board for continuity of the maintained watercourses and access for maintenance access. Also, the Board's requirements for consenting of both temporary and permanent works.

A meeting was held on 20th September 2023 to discuss the design of the bridge to be constructed over Upper Witham IDB's Hykeham Pump Drain South and Waddington Drain South. Arrangements were agreed to allow continuity of maintenance for these two watercourses. It was emphasised that consent will be required for any works within any watercourse, both temporary and permanent works.

Saxilby Pumping Station

A visual inspection of the pumping station was undertaken by Board's officers, on 03rd October 2023. The purpose of the inspection was to provide a brief overview of the general condition of the station infrastructure, particularly the main civil components of the facility.

Concerns relating to the main outfall pipe along with other structural issues had been highlighted prior to the inspection.

To inspect the lower structure, the pump inlet chamber was accessed via a hatch in the pump room. It was found that major cracking had occurred within the chamber, with vertical cracking to both side walls of the chamber emanating from the external end weed screen deck and extending downwards into the water. The cracking was inaccessible for direct measurement but appeared to be in the order of 20mm wide.

On review of the historic record drawings held for the structure, the cracking appears to correspond with a change in foundation type. The main part of the pump house is supported by a piled foundation, whereas the external portion of the inlet is ground bearing.

Also observed was substantial loss of concrete to the soffit of the weed screen deck. The concrete has spalled off the soffit, exposing reinforcement bars to most of the width of the deck, extending back some 300-500mm. Again, this defect was inaccessible for direct measurement, but appeared to be historic in nature, possibly stemming from a casting defect during construction. Severe cracking to the masonry portion of the pump house is visible both internally and externally, which would be consistent with structural movement of the building. As previously reported, the main outlet pipe of the pump is known to need replacement. This station was constructed using in-house labour between 1953-1955.

Members received and NOTED the report and update.

44.23 Consents and Enforcements Report.

The Director of Engineering & Technical Services introduced the Consents and Enforcements Report which had been circulated with the agenda and set out the position, both within the drainage district and in the extended rainfall catchment where the Board acts for and on behalf of LCC, as the LLFA.

Pleasingly, many cases had been closed since the last report and there was nothing to highlight on this occasion.

Members did request an update on one item, as they were expecting a closure during the summer on this case. It was confirmed this would be investigated and updated at the January Board Meeting.

UD-6011-2022-ENF	Morrison's Car Park, Tritton Road	Maintenance access blocked by single storey building	The slab is in place and awaiting instruction from Morrison's for building to be moved.
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Members received and NOTED the report on consents and enforcement cases.

45.23 Planning and Consultations Report.

A report had been prepared and was presented by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

There were no recommendations to the Board on this occasion, the information within the report was for information.

The Board had received several consultations and commented on various planning applications to the different Local Planning Authorities [LPAs]. A full schedule was provided.

Members noted the report.

46.23 External Auditors' Notice of Closure IDB Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

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

The Annual Return 2022/23 was agreed at the Board meeting on 22nd May 2023, subsequently published on the Board's website for public inspection and despatched to the Board's appointed External Auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP on 09th June 2023. The public inspection period was from 12th June 2023 until 21st July 2023. The Board had until 30th June 2023 to approve and submit its Annual Return 2022/23.

The External Auditor has a statutory deadline of 30th September 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 and received on 8th September 2023.

Part 2 of section 3 of the AGAR had 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 completes the External Audit for 2022/23 and this Board, along with the other 3 Boards in the Witham & Humber Drainage Boards group, have all received the same Audit opinion, so there are no issues to report to the Board.

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was issued on 20th September 2023 and has been displayed at the Board's depot, on the Board's website and at Witham House office.

Members noted the External Audit Notice of Closure on the IDB Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2022/23, and the clean audit result.

47.23 Governance & Corporate Risk.

An update had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance and Governance.

A revised Risk Register would be brought to the January Board meeting. Members were advised that insurance meetings and reviews had already commenced in preparation for the renewal in summer 2024; the renewals would go to the July Joint Services Committee.

Members noted the update.

48.23 2023/24 Financial Report to 31.10.23

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

The Board was showing a positive position against the profiled budget as at 31st October 2023. However, this did not show the financial impact of the October 2023 Storm Babet event. Some of the 'high risk' spend areas can recur (especially electricity) and inflationary increases continue to be seen across many budget heads which will impact on the remainder of this financial year. Electricity price increases have been implemented from 01st October 2023 which will have a further impact on the Board's financial position over the remainder of this financial year.

The main income streams have been posted in terms of Drainage Rates raised (not necessarily paid) at (£309k) and Special Levies received (£1.102m) for the full year payment from the 5 relevant councils. Ongoing action is taking place against unpaid drainage rate account holders (see Drainage Rates below).

Rechargeable Works are being undertaken again mainly for the EA through the PSCA. Invoices have been raised up to the end of August (£109k) for PSCA and (£9k) in other recharges.

Highland Water claims have been submitted to the Environment Agency for 2022/23 actual costs with a further balance of (£31,207) paid, and for the 2023/24 Estimated claim of (£257,000). The EA has paid 80% of the estimated claim for 2023/24 (£205,600) along with the balance for 2022/23 actual costs incurred (£31,207), i.e., total (£236,807). Correspondingly, the balance adjusted for actual 2023/24 costs incurred will be payable in September 2024.

The adverse variance shown under the heading for 'Board & General Administration' of £23k wholly relates to the additional Worldpay charges incurred following the card testing fraud originating in Brazil which was targeted at the Worldpay hosted telephone payments system. This has been pursued since June 2023 and a formal complaint was submitted on behalf of the Board to Worldpay on 28th September 2023. To date, no response has been received. This is being followed up on a weekly basis. This Board had been the worst affected, although all Boards had been targeted to some degree. This amount included £6k payments plus a further £13k and a further VAT charge for transaction charges. It was clear that it would be necessary to change providers from Worldpay once this issue is resolved.

For 'One off Schemes' the main scheme undertaken is the refurbishment works at Pyewipe Pumping Station. Most of the works are now complete. A revised scheme was agreed with the EA totalling £713,171 with FDGIA grant awarded of £557,517. The remaining funding is made up of (£141k) of developer funding to meet the cost of the replacement Automatic Weedscreen Cleaner (AWC) and a (£15k) Board contribution which has already been transferred to the One-Off Projects reserve in 2021/22. FDGIA grant of (£489,246) has been received so far in previous financial years to undertake these works. Also, the AWC cost has been recharged to & paid by City of Lincoln Council as a developer contribution of (£154,203). Expenditure so far has been incurred of £571,514. The summary table shows the current income and expenditure on the scheme. The costs are offset by the transfer from the One-Off reserve (see below).

The Telemetry scheme has also been agreed by the EA totalling (£118,224) of FDGIA with a (£1k) contribution by the Board. The bulk of the works have now been completed which means the old, hosted Telemetry server has now been switched off and several landline and SIM contracts have been cancelled generating ongoing savings to offset against the annual costs of the new system.

Detail was provided showing the current position of the Drainage Rates collected for 2023/24 including previous years' arrears as at 31st October 2023. The collection rate stands at 92.1% (96.2% @P7 2022/23) so slightly below last year's collection rate. First reminders were despatched on 15th August 2023 and final reminders were despatched on 05th October 2023. A court date was set for 15th January 2024 at Boston Magistrates Court. All historical outstanding rating queries are now resolved and only land issues raised from in-year are now being actioned.

Members discussed the significant increases in electricity rates from October 2022 via the ESPO Electricity Framework that the Board uses, with unit prices averaging 30p/KWH and Standing Charges increasing from £12k to £29k p.a. for the Board and from £51k to £128k for the Witham and Humber Group. However, these unit rates did not increase as significantly as the market, where rates peaked at over 70p/KWH. Due to the 'forward buying' model used by ESPO it did mean that further increases would feed through in the following year from 01.10.23 (estimated to be 40p/KWH).

Budgets for 2023/24 were calculated based upon these anticipated October 2023 rates, with 30p/KWH for the first 6 months of 2023/24 and 40p/KWH for the last 6 months, along with the new standing charges for 6 months and an anticipated +10% for the final 6 months. However, these budgets were predicated on an 'average' rainfall year/usage, not a 'dry' year or a 'wet' year such as 2019/20.

The electricity budgets approved for 2023/24 for the Boards were [2022/23 as a comparator]:

	Budget 2023/24	Budget 2022/23
NEL	£ 90,000	£ 15,000
UW	£ 192,000	£ 48,000
W1	£ 305,000	£ 69,000
W3	£ 220,000	£ 69,000
Total	£ 807,000	£ 201,000

For October alone UW had incurred electricity charges of £40,196. As a comparison W1 was facing a bill for £103k and W3 a bill for £72k.

For the period of this report (first 6 months for electricity, to 30.09.23) these budgets have been sufficient with some modest savings to the end of September invoices across the 4 Boards. However, that was before Storm Babet in October, which will change the 30.11.23 position and onwards in 2023/24.

New rates have been received from ESPO applicable from 01st October 2023. The good news is that due to the buying strategy used by ESPO, the hourly rates are increasing to an average of 33.5p/KWH rather than the 40p estimated. Whilst generally energy rates are reducing currently, due to the way that ESPO 'buy ahead' blocks of units of electricity there has been a lag in the increases. However, when looking across

the last 2 years, unit rates have been @30p and now 33.5p which are far less than the large increases seen over the last 12 months.

Members were requested to review the write-off of drainage rates proposed in the report, which comprised accounts under £2.50 where it is not economical to send out an invoice and unregistered land where no owner/occupier has been identified.

Members APPROVED the Write-Off of drainage rates, as follows:

Under £2.50	£33.55
Uncollectable:	
0255	£86.28
0306	£195.45
0675	£13.56
TOTAL	£328.84

Members NOTED the 2023/24 financial performance for the period 01st April to 31st October 2023.

49.23 Environment Annual Report.

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented to the Members by the Director of Engineering.

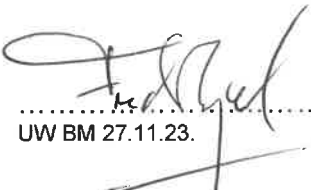
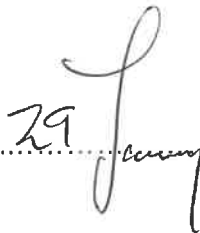
Members noted the contents of the Annual Report.

50.23 Any Other Business.

There were no further items of business and the meeting closed at 15.50.

51.23 Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Board was confirmed for Monday, 29th January 2024 at 2pm in Witham House. Video Conference attendance would be available for a hybrid meeting.

 Chairman  29 January 2024 Date
UW BM 27.11.23.