

TRENT VALLEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board held via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference on Thursday, 25th March 2021.

Elected Members

* Messrs J. Miller (Chairman)
* T.H Farr (Vice-Chairman)
* R. Warburton
* A. Arden
W.J. Staunton
N.J. Greenhalgh
T. Hawthorne
* R.J. Jackson
D. Loates
* D. Gash
* Mrs J Love

Nominated Members

Bassetlaw District Council
Cllrs K.H. Isard
Mrs S. Fielding
* J. Naish
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Cllrs Mrs S. Michael
* I. Walker
J. Lee
* Mrs L. Dales
Rushcliffe Borough Council
* Cllrs Mrs M. Stockwood
* K. Shaw
Mrs C. Jeffreys
* Mrs P. Gowland
Gedling/Melton Borough Councils
* Mr J. Evens
West Lindsey/North Kesteven District Councils
* Cllr P. Overton

* Present

Staff

* Messrs A. McGill (Chief Executive)
* N. Kemble (Engineer)
* M.S. Everett (Operations Manager)
* A.J. Malin (Senior Operations Manager)
* Mesdames N. Hind (Finance Manager)
* C.B. Davies (Corporate Services Manager)

* In attendance

Invited Representatives of Partner Organisations

Miss S. Jaques (Nottinghamshire County Council)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs J. Lee, K.H. Isard, Mrs S. Fielding, C. Jeffreys, S. Michael and Messrs N.J. Greenhaugh, D. Loates and T. Hawthorne.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared an interest in item 5, Matters Arising 12:10 as a neighbouring landowner to the British Sugar site.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed he would be raising the issue of Hoveringham Lakes and Tarmac's proposed plans to relinquish responsibility.

4. BOARD MINUTES (Pages 440 to 454)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28th January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and the resolutions be adopted by the Board.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5:1 Minute 8 - Page 441 - Drainage Rates and Special Levies

The Finance Manager confirmed that the small amount outstanding in Special Levies was £5,000. In response to a question raised she confirmed that this was not due to an inability to pay but an administration oversight.

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5:2 Minute 12:10 - Page 449 - Asset Renewal and Refurbishment Projects

Cllr P. Overton asked for confirmation that the proposed works at the British Sugar site would be completed to the Board's satisfaction. The Engineer confirmed that written confirmation had been received from British Sugar in respect of the works proposed and that a site visit would be made to ensure completion. The Chairman asked if he could attend the visit.

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5:3 Minute 18 - Page 453 - Staffing

The Boards commitment to the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Pay and Conditions Committee was discussed, and it was felt that this should be discussed further at the Consortium Committee meeting in April and reported back to the Board at the next meeting.

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5:4 Minute 19 - Page 454 - Water Resources East

It was reported that Mr W.J. Staunton and Mr T.H Farr had challenged ADA in respect of the contributions currently made to Water Resources East. As a result, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Board would not need to make a contribution this year. He also confirmed that notice had been given to withdraw all three Board's back in January and this would be reconsidered in the 21/22; although this would now only apply to LMDB. He confirmed that the Consortium would continue to offer support and knowledge to Water Resources East.

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6. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Senior Operations Manager presented the WMC Consortium Health and Safety Annual Review and confirmed there were 39 action areas to be considered. Safe systems of works were being refreshed/introduced. It was also confirmed that a new robust audit process would be introduced.

It was reported that there had been twenty-two incidents in total for the year. He commented that this was low for the size of the Consortium, however, a sizable proportion of the Consortium staff had been working from home. The Board's attention was drawn to the industry averages for workplace injury and in particular those associated with construction and agriculture, and forestry and fishing which reflect the Board's activities.

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7. DRAINAGE RATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

7:1 Rate Collection

The Finance Manager reported that drainage rates and special levies collected to date totalled 98.91%. Of the outstanding balance as at 31st March 2020, £3,169.93 had been recovered. Ten cases had been sent to the bailiffs.

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7:2 Rate Write Offs

The Finance Manager presented a schedule of proposed write-offs totalling £751.16 for the Board to consider.

RESOLVED

That the schedule of write-offs be approved.

8. FINANCE

8:1 Management Accounts for the period ending 31st January 2021

The Finance Manager presented the management accounts up to the 31st January 2021 together with the Income and Expenditure accounts detailing the variance of actual income and costs to estimates.

The variance report showed that income was lower than anticipated for the ten-month period to 31st January 2021 resulting in a negative income variance of £152,399.59. It was confirmed that income was still to be received in respect of recharge works and the PSCA agreement. The Finance Manager commented that the Absorbed Income expected from our Own Use of Plant deployed in both operations and engineering projects was lower than anticipated. Whilst the aim was for the figure to be accurate, any variance would not impact on the Board's cash position or the overall outturn.

The Finance Manager reported a positive variance of £215,016.089 in the respect of Maintenance and Development Expenditure. The variance was mainly due to under-absorbed plant cost of £151,991 within Flailing and Weedcutting. This lower than estimated cost is matched by a lower than estimated income. Any variance in this area had no impact in the Board's cash position or the overall outturn, as any lower than expected cost was matched by the lower than expected income and vice versa. The costs that would have an impact on the cash reserves are those relating to pumping stations costs, which were £98,966 below estimate. The majority of the variance (£64,500) related to Electricity costs and it was expected that this would be clawed back in February and March. The external costs of stock expenditure and contractor costs within Drain Maintenance were higher than estimated by approximately £28,979. Funds had been transferred from Engineering Schemes to meet this expenditure and lessen the impact on reserves. The variance report for Supportive Expenditure showed a negative variance of £13,244.39. Consortium costs were higher than estimated by £27,763 and this was due to increased staff costs and lower than anticipated recharge of engineers' time to projects. As previously, reported, it was expected that the Consortium costs would be higher than estimated in the 2021/22 year due to a delayed project. Estimated loan interest payments payable in the year 2021/22 were lower as a new loan had not yet been drawn down.

A variance report was also presented for Engineering Schemes together with a detailed breakdown of individual projects.

The balance sheet was presented, and it was reported that the expected outturn effecting the cash reserves was a positive balance of £27,810.20. The Surplus Cash Reserve was 30.63%

In response to a question raised, the Finance Manager confirmed that Pumping Station valuations were calculated once a year with an annual depreciation applied.

8:2 Cash Reserves and Investments as at 31st January 2021

It was reported that the Board had five accounts with a total balance of £1,469,113.81.

The Board had one loan with a balance outstanding of £593,207.55.

8:3 Payment over £500

A schedule of payments over £500 was presented and it was confirmed that these totalled £248,593.74.

RESOLVED

- (a) The Management Accounts for the period ending 31st January 2021 be approved.
- (b) That cash balances and borrowings be noted.
- (c) That the schedule of payments over £500 totaling £248,593.74 be approved.

9. COMPENSATION RATES 2021/22

The attached compensation rates for 2021/22 were presented for members approval. These had been prepared in line with the Board's policy.

In response to a question raised, the Senior Operations Manager confirmed that compensation rates were reviewed annually and would reflect changes in crop prices. If prices were to increase dramatically then officers would reconsider the Board's position and make a recommendation to the Board. The Chairman confirmed that the Board were not compelled to pay compensation but offered it as a gesture of goodwill.

RESOLVED

That the attached rates of compensation for 2021/2022 be approved.

10. OPERATIONS REPORT

The Operations Manager reported that 97% of last year's summer maintenance work had been completed at a cost of £240,935.89 against a budget of £420,240.00. Variances were detailed in the Finance report. Outstanding roadside and hand work would be completed over the next few weeks.

He commented that access arrangements were still an issue for the Board's operatives in certain areas. Notice of Entry was sent out to all ratepayers in the annual newsletter which was issued with the drainage rates. The Board's operatives also contact individual landowners (where we hold that information) prior to entry to let them know we require access on to their land. Support of the local Board members to highlight the need for us to have access and encouraging farmers to leave an access strip would be appreciated. Over

the next month or so, officers would be reviewing how we can improve this and finding out what other boards do in terms of compensation, notices of entry etc. In the meantime, a letter would be sent out with the drainage rates appealing for support from the local farming community and officers would also liaise with their contacts at the NFU to enlist their support.

Strategic watercourses had been identified across the district and these were monitored on a regular basis to ensure the continued flow of water, if necessary early weed removal, prior to the normal 16th July weed cutting start date, would be undertaken in consultation with the Board's Environmental Officer. Many of the Board maintained watercourses were gravity, requiring less maintenance, but others such as the pumped catchments in the Laneham area require more attention. Weed growth last year was late but accelerated in July/August, the majority of the problems being caused by weed, rather than reeds in the watercourses.

Fly tipping continued to be an issue throughout the area with at least one report every month. The Board had a good relationship with Newark and Sherwood District Council and working together the Board's operatives removing any debris from the watercourse and the Council taking this away.

Approximately 85% of the planned 2020/21 winter works programme had been completed. Costs up to the end of January were £132,815.57 against an initial budget of £168,320 (this budget was increased to £205,845.20 and full details are covered in the Finance report). Any work not undertaken would be carried over to the 2021/22 winter period. Work this year focussed on the Grassthorpe Beck catchment (including tree and bushing, access improvements, silt removal and removal of blockages) and this change in approach, with efforts concentrated in one area, had worked well. However, this meant that there was still work to be undertaken in other areas across the district and officers would be reviewing this over the coming year, prioritising the work to ensure that the necessary access improvements, tree and bushing, reforming etc. were included in the programme.

In respect of the Direct Labour Operatives the Operations Manager confirmed that the three new starters appointed last year had settled in well and that there was now a full complement of staff to start the summer season. Officers would shortly be reviewing the 2021/22 summer maintenance programme and would then meet with the members of the DLO to discuss the workload ensuring that they were aware of the work required and the timeframe for completion; this would also include a briefing from the Board's Environmental Officer.

Tenders for the supply of a new tractor and rear-mounted Bomford flail to replace the 2006 Massey Ferguson 5460 tractor (FX06 FFG) with front loader and 2012 Bomford 81-81 flail mower, had been sought from eight suppliers in February. A budget provision of £155,000 had been made in the 2021/22 for this purchase.

The 2006 tractor was 15 years old and had completed in excess of 5,500 hours. It was now showing signs of wear and tear including intermittent gear box issues. It had been used for towing the excavator and was now mainly used in the yard for loading. The new tractor and flail would be utilised during the weedcutting season. Details of the tenders received were presented and it was confirmed that three suppliers declined to tender. Officers recommended that the Board purchased a Case 150 CVX and Bomford 81-81 flail mower at a net cost of £126,431 and trade-in the 2006 tractor/flail at a cost of £28,000.

Quotations had been sought from Woldmarsh for a new pickup to replace the 4x4 pickup (FT64 BYA). Woldmarsh approached Ford, Nissan, Toyota and Isuzu for prices but only three suppliers responded. Of the six quotations received, there were three suitable vehicles which met the Board's requirements; the others were either not suitable or exceeded the budget. Officers recommended the purchase of a Nissan Navara at a cost of £25,191.50. Although the vehicle was slightly over the estimated cost, the overall net plant budget was expected to be within the budget of £203,000.

RESOLVED

- (a) The Board approved the purchase of a Case 150CVX and Bomford 81-81 flail mower at a net cost of £126,431 and trade-in of the tractor/flail at a £28,000 in the 2021/22 financial year.
- (b) The Board approved the purchase of a Nissan Navara 4x4 pickup at a cost of £25,191.50 in the financial year 2021/22.
- (c) To note the report of Officers.

11. REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that requests had been sent to all members at the end of February 2021 asking them to review and update their Declaration of Interest forms. It was essential that this was completed annually for good Governance and this would be reviewed by the Internal Auditor.

Any members who had not yet completed their declaration were advised to contact the Corporate Services Team to either confirm their declarations were still valid or complete a new form.

12. CORPORATE SERVICES UPDATE

The Corporate Services Manager presented her report commenting that home working was working well within the Consortium and that consideration would be given to extending this in the future. It was confirmed that there had been 12 new appointments during the year including three new members of the DLO team for the Board. A new LMDB Rating Officer had been appointed and the new Field Engineer had also started. As a result of an internal appointment there was currently a vacancy for a Planning and Byelaw Officer.

It was confirmed that there were a number of projects being undertaken by the Corporate Services Team, which included:

- (a) Electronic working - the final stages were being trialled and then it would be introduced across the Consortium. This would enable all staff to complete their timesheets electronically and the information would be extracted automatically for input into the Sage accounting system. Through their tablet the DLO would also have access to the training portal and their personal information for booking holiday etc. The new complaints database would also go live at the same time.
- (b) Training Portal - the new portal included mandatory training on Data Protection and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety. There were two modules for employees WMC About Us and WMC Health and Safety which gave an overview of the Consortium and ensured all staff are familiar with health, safety and welfare. The portal also included other e-learning development material and user guides for Sage were to be prepared.
- (c) Asset Management System - it was confirmed that discussion had taken place with three companies regarding the provision of an AMS for the Consortium. This would record all the assets (pumping stations, watercourses, plant and equipment) and would ensure all the information is stored and accessed in one place. Costs were still being sought, however, a provision of £30,000 had been allowed in the estimates for the 2021/22 financial year.
- (d) Filing Structure - the existing filing structure was being reviewed in line with the Boards' Data Retention Policy. A new filing system was being developed for easier use. This would include strict permissions to ensure confidentiality, a

disposal date and owner. This would enable files to be monitored and ensure that we remained compliant with GDPR.

- (e) IT - Upgrades to the IT server and network infrastructure were underway at Manby, Epworth and Newark offices as well as the LMDB Strubby Depot to facilitate much improved access speeds. The IT support ticketing had logged over 400 issues since April last year. This did not include setting up equipment for new starters, supporting meetings and general day to day issues that arose with the phones, server, databases, software etc. that support three offices, 75 employees and 86 members across the Consortium.
- (f) Health and Wellbeing - All Consortium employees now had access to RISE health and wellbeing service which provided 24/7 access to advice and support.
- (g) Land Registration - All land owned across the consortium was being registered in the correct name and address and plotted on to the Geographical Information System. Once this information was complete, a full list would be sent to members.
- (h) PR - The importance of raising the profiles of the Boards' had been highlight and we were now in a position to dedicate more time to this. Social media presence had been increased on facebook and twitter. A review of the website was planned for 2021/22 and would include any necessary changes to include Doncaster East IDB as a member of the Consortium. A draft Communications Strategy was being prepared and would be brought to the Board later in the year.
- (i) Policies - ongoing review.
- (j) Queries and Complaints - A total of 476 complaints had been received across the consortium for the year. The majority related to flooding, operations or byelaws. The new system would enable these to be monitored and flagged to the relevant Officer and Senior Management Team if they exceeded timescales.
- (k) Boards - An election would be held for the Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Board. A vacancy on the Board had been advertised. A reconstitution of the Doncaster East Internal Drain Board would take place in 2021.

13. VIRTUAL TOUR

The Engineer presented a virtual tour, updating members on schemes and projects undertaken in 2020/21 and those planned over the next few years. The total investment in schemes between 2017 and 2023 including grants was £5.1 million.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14:1 Hoveringham Lakes

Cllr R. Jackson joined the meeting to discuss an issue that had arisen at Hoveringham Lakes. Tarmac who previously maintained the lakes would relinquish their interest shortly. He commented that there was an outfall structure which discharged into the Board's Spital Wood Dumble Drain and that the Board had been approached to consider adopting this outfall. He commented that the Operations Manager was aware of the site and the proposal, but he felt it was important that the structure was in a condition fit for purpose so that the Board did not incur future costs.

The Engineer confirmed that no official approach had been made, so he had been unable to bring a recommendation to the Board. However, an inspection would be carried out and a commuted sum negotiated for future maintenance.

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CHAIRMAN