

# **BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **MINUTES**

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held remotely on  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 at 2pm

### **Members**

Chairman - \* Mr P Holmes

* Mr W Ash	* Mr J Atkinson
* Mr V Barker	* Mr K C Casswell
Mr R Leggott	Mr P Robinson
* Mr R Welberry	* Mr J R Wray

\* Member Present

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)  
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)  
Amanda Jenkins (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)  
Cllr P Skinner (Board Member)

Due to COVID-19, this meeting will be held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The Chairman noted the cancellation of the 2019 Environment Committee Meeting due to COVID-19, reassuring the committee that environmental matters were addressed at the Executive Committee meeting.

#### 1736 RECORDING THE MEETING - Agenda Item 1

Board Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

#### 1737 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 2

Apologies were received from Mr P Robinson.

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Amanda Jenkins, the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Conservation Officer, covering the Fens area; mainly Boston Borough and South Holland.

The Chief Executive referred to Minute 1447 of the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019, highlighting that it was suggested that Cllr P Skinner be invited onto the Environment Committee due to his position as ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee Chairman, but that it was not actually agreed by the committee at that meeting. The Chief Executive informed the committee that he had invited Cllr P Skinner to this meeting, with a view to him joining the committee. Proposed by Mr K Casswell, seconded by the Chairman, all AGREED that Cllr P Skinner should be a member of the Environment Committee. The Chairman welcomed Cllr P Skinner to the committee.

1738 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

1739 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record with the following amendment:

- Minute 1436 – the date of the previous meeting minutes ‘27<sup>th</sup> June 2019’ should be ‘27<sup>th</sup> June 2018’.
- Minute 1447 – spelling mistake of ‘Environment’ in the title

1740 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 5

There were no matters arising.

1741 TO REVIEW THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - Agenda Item 6

The Chairman presented the Environment Committee Terms of Reference, with the only one amendment, inviting opinions of the committee.

All AGREED that the Environment Committee Terms of Reference be recommended to the Board for approval.

1742 TO REVIEW THE ‘NEW’ DRAFT BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (POLICY No. 11) - Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), noting that at one point there were discussions with the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) about the possibility of moving towards a Green Recovery Plan. However, Defra have since confirmed that IDBs should hold a BAP.

The Chief Executive referenced the draft BAP circulated with the agenda, noting that an extensive amount of work has been completed on it since and so there is now an updated draft BAP. The Chief Executive Officer invited questions and opinions of the BAP circulated but suggested that the updated version be circulated following the meeting for committee members to review at their leisure. The Chief Executive gave the suggested following timeline;

- The updated BAP to be circulated to the Environment Committee and Amanda Jenkins, via email, by the end of the week (5<sup>th</sup> March)
- Members to review and share comments / questions via email or telephone before 2<sup>nd</sup> April
- Officers can then amend the plan according to the feedback received to be presented to the Board on 30<sup>th</sup> June for approval.

The updated BAP was presented on screen, with new additions highlighted in red, to demonstrate to the committee how much work has been completed on it. The Chief Executive noted Appendix 4 the map showing Non Statutory Local Sites, noting his pleasant surprise at the number of sites identified within the catchment. Amanda Jenkins added that there is also a map of the quality of some of the Local Wildlife Sites in terms of how many species they have, noting she can forward this on.

The Chairman questioned if the reason behind the quality of the site would be identified? Amanda Jenkins responded that there are citations for each site, which can be used to find out, noting that the GLNP could most likely provide the Board with the citations. The Chief Executive noted that this information has been shared and referenced within the BAP, adding that any information that could be useful to include or reference within the BAP would be appreciated.

The Chairman noted that the BAP is a fluid document, echoed by the Chief Executive.

All AGREED that the updated BAP be circulated to members by the end of the week via email, for members to review and share comments / questions via email or telephone before 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Officers can then amend the plan according to the feedback received to be presented to the Board on 30<sup>th</sup> June for approval.

The Chairman suggested that it may be beneficial for the Officers to share all email responses with all members of the committee to avoid getting duplicates of the same feedback and questions.

The Chief Executive also noted that this committee should perhaps consider receiving their agenda via email, noting that it may be something the Board has to seriously consider in the future.

1743 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORK COMPLETED IN 2020/21 AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED WORKS FOR 2021/22 - Agenda Item 8

The Operations Manager presented this agenda item, inviting questions and opinions of the committee.

The committee AGREED the budgetary figures included within the agenda report.

1744 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON BARN OWL NESTING BOXES FOR 2019 & 2020 - Agenda Item 9

The Chairman presented this agenda item, noting the written report from Alan Ball within the agenda which is not positive news for Barn Owls, noting his hope that they will be able to rectify themselves following a bad year.

Mr V Barker referenced Boxes 1371 and 1293 in the annual check report by Alan Ball, explaining that he believes they should be 'Dowsby Lode' as opposed to 'Dowsby Fen'. The Operations Manager confirmed that Mr Barker was correct. The Chief Executive noted that they will talk to Alan Ball and ask him to amend accordingly.

1745 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE 2019 & 2020 BUTTERFLY RECORDS FROM WINDMILL LODGE BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE AREA, AMBER HILL - Agenda Item 10

The Chairman presented this agenda item, noting his thanks, on behalf of the committee, to Phil and Ros Bowler for their work and for keeping the Board and Committee informed also.

The Chief Executive requested that Amanda Jenkins pass this information to the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GNLP), noting he feels they may be interested in reviewing it. Amanda Jenkins confirmed she would.

1746 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL PRESENTATION FROM THE GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE NATURE PARTNERHSIP (GLNP), LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST (LWT) & THE SOUTH LINC'S FENLANDS PARTNERSHIP (SLFP) - Agenda Item 11

Amanda Jenkins commenced by noting the positive working relationship between Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and the BSIDB, thanking the Board for their help and support, adding how easy it is to work with the Board and their gratefulness for all help in contacting landowners and time and effort on various nature related projects.

Amanda Jenkins informed the committee of various projects as follows;

- ADA Pollinator Project – The Government have set out a 25 year plan that recognises the negative impact modern society and its ways of life have had on the environment. The plan recognises that nature needs to recover and sets out a nature strategy, it being noted that the nature strategy could eventually take over the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). It also refers to National and Local Planning Policies, stating that there must be no net loss to biodiversity but must be net gain on certain projects above a certain size.

Amanda Jenkins noted that IDBs are doing well in relation to this; management of Fenland watercourses, helping to preserve biodiversity and working on many projects together. One particular project that would be beneficial is a pollinator project. The Environment Agency have been researching how to improve their watercourses and assets for pollinators. If Black Sluice and other IDBs were able to replicate this work across their banks and pumping stations, they would help to create a nature recovery network for pollinators across the county. The basic aim of the ADA pollinator project is to improve flower-richness of IDB banks and assets with a specific emphasis on improving habitat for pollinators. This would be done with guidance from an ecologist to ensure a consistent approach and avoid any damage to banks. In brief the project would consist of an ecological consultant working with IDBs to achieve the following:

- Ecological assessment and surveys of selected banks to assess baseline condition – some of this is already done through fenland flora surveys. Need to avoid areas that are already species rich.
- Prioritise sites for improvement / management
- Collect wildflower cuttings
- Grow on plants with local growers – has to be in set conditions
- Plant out
- Monitor for plant diversity and pollinators

Amanda Jenkins noted that she will send the precis following the meeting.

- Green Recovery Fund – Bourne North Fen was not successful however other funding streams are continuing to be applied for. There is some ring fenced match funding from Anglian Water and Affinity Water through the South Lincs Water Partnership (SLWP).
- Boston Alternative Energy Facility – The Chief Executive noted that the Board has been involved with this throughout the pre-planning process.

Amanda Jenkins noted the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT) have been commenting and advising on the ecological assessment alongside Natural England and the RSPB.

- Community Naturehoods – This idea is just starting to be developed in Baston & Boston. Setting up a naturehood includes ecological surveys of selected public access areas – parks, gardens, school, verges, water courses etc, writing management plans to improve these areas and then holding demonstration events to show people how to make a difference for wildlife in their gardens.

Amanda Jenkins added that she noted the Board's work at the Risegate Eau, with the Chief Executive noting that the site was not particularly successful and would be interested in seeking guidance around how to develop it. Mr V Barker noted that last year some wildflower did come through the bank, it may have taken two years for them to grow from seed, noting that further work may be able to be done with Lesley's son. The Chairman added that the ground was perhaps too fertile and therefore the wildflowers could not compete.

Amanda Jenkins noted that the Risegate Eau school have been working on a wildlife project, questioning if the Board do any community work? The Chairman responded that he has previously tried to engage with another local primary school about farming and IDB work but unfortunately, due to their strict and tight curriculum, it has not been of interest to them. Amanda Jenkins added that the Risegate Eau School contacted Amanda about having a nature area at school, suggesting whether there may be a potential link between the school and Black Sluice IDB.

Mr V Barker noted that he would be willing to help, adding that he has seen some of the children going for walks on both sides of the drain previously.

The Chief Executive added that the Board would be willing partners to offer assistance and support within and around the catchment.

It was confirmed that Amanda Jenkins will follow up the possible connection with the school and that Mr V Barker's details will be forwarded to her.

- ESIF Bid – The Chief Executive explained that the Lincolnshire County Council, as a lead partner of the SLWP, applied for a monetary bid to implement smart water catchment monitoring within the Board's catchment. This includes rainfall, gravity flows, water quality, content, it being in relation to Anglian Water and Affinity Water who have formed the first water authority partnership to transfer water from a part of the country that does have water to a part that doesn't. The tendering process was conducted and put out for bid, only one company returned a tender bid and the Lincolnshire County Council's procurement team did not believe the quality of the bid was good enough to be able to award the contract, therefore the process is now running again. As long as readings have started to be collected by the end of September 2021, the funding remains available. Amanda Jenkins added that the LWT have been involved to help collect the baseline environmental data for this project.

The Chairman thanked Amanda Jenkins for the update.

1747 TO RECEIVE THE ADA TECHNICAL NOTE ENVIRONMENTAL BILL - Agenda Item 12

The Chairman presented the Environment Bill, noting that it has not yet been signed off.

1748 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES FROM THE ADA LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: - Agenda Item 13

The Chairman presented the minutes from the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Cllr P Skinner, as Chairman of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee, noting some interesting points, as follows. He firstly noted the work Amanda Jenkins discussed regarding the pollinators, emphasising the importance of getting some pollinator corridors through the area.

Cllr P Skinner next referred to invasive species, in particular, referencing Mink. Cllr P Skinner noted that some people are volunteering to monitor traps but are not doing it properly, and animals shouldn't be suffering because of this, they need to be dispatched as quickly as possible.

The Operations Manager noted that there are alarms available now which can be monitored on a mobile phone app noting that the Board no longer place mink traps due to the requirement for them to be checked on a daily basis.

Amanda Jenkins noted there is due to be some research conducted on the remote mink traps on the Waithe Beck and the Great Eau, noting that she can keep the Board updated on this once it has commenced. Amanda Jenkins noted that she is not aware of the cost of the traps, as they aren't purchased, but noted that it is the Chalk Streams Project doing the work. Mr R Welberry noted that he has seen mink in the Simon Weir drain and into the Hammond Beck.

The Chief Executive noted that the Operations Manager is looking into the new remote traps which send a notification to a connected phone when the trap has gone off. It therefore will save money and time in reducing the need to travel to site to check, as the site will only need to be attended once notified by phone. Amanda Jenkins noted that the trials in Norfolk have shown that they are 100% accurate.

Cllr P Skinner noted that there is another meeting scheduled for April, him being keen to ensure the work is being completed. He further noted that all of the Lincolnshire IDBs and landowners take this work very seriously and can see the benefits of this work.

1749 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 14

(a) CONTROL OF BADGERS

Mr V Barker referred to badgers, noting that he recently attended a virtual meeting about them and the idea of birth control. He further referenced Genetic Editing, in relation to grey squirrels being injected so that the female produced male offspring only so that eventually the population dies out. Mr V Barker noted that other ways should be investigated to control these mammals so that it is in sympathy of the general public.

(b) DEFRA NATURAL ENVIRONMENT INVESTMENT READINESS FUND

The Chief Executive informed the committee that there is a new Defra Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund available. There are individual grants of up to £100,000 available for local environmental groups, which includes IDBs.

The Chief Executive noted that there is one particular aspect of work that he felt could be focused upon; developing berms in banks to introduce wildlife. This may also mean that the banks could be graded back at a lesser angle, meaning they would be less susceptible to slips. The Chief Executive noted that they will progress it and keep the committee updated.

Mr R Welberry suggested that the grant could be used to purchase some remote mink traps. The Chief Executive noted he has already thought this.

The Chairman raised his concern about the potential theft of a remote trap. Amanda Jenkins noted that in the Norfolk trials they were placed depending on how many people would see them, but that they are easy to hide, also noting that they are not always baited either.

(c) VIKING LINK

Mr R Wray referenced the ongoing Viking Link project at Donington Northorpe. He noted that the environmental impact of this has been discussed, with Viking Link being open to help in any way they can in relation to this. Mr R Wray noted that the site is surrounded by Black Sluice drains and so the Board may want to consider talking to them about various possibilities. The Operations Manager noted he will speak with Mr R Wray following the meeting.

(d) PAST BOARD MEMBER - EDGAR BETTISON

Mr R Welberry informed the committee that Edgar Bettison, a previous Board Member, is unfortunately in hospital after falling and breaking his hip.

(e) WATER VOLES

Mr R Welberry noted the number of active Water Voles that can be seen at Westwood Lakes. The Chairman added that he has also seen them on the farm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:06.