

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the
Environment Committee

At a Meeting of the Environment Committee held at the Offices of the Board on
Wednesday 21st May 2008 at 2.30pm.

Members

Chairman - * Mr J R Wray

* Mr C A Fretwell
Mr M J Scott
* Mr R J Watts

* Mr R Welberry
Mr A S Whitehead
Mr G S Woodward

* Members Present

In attendance: Mr V A Barker (Board Member)
Mr F W C Holmes (Board Member)
Mr P Robinson (Board Member)
Mr S M Hemmings (Chief Executive)
Mr M L Mitchell (Senior Engineer)
Mr J Harpley (Environmental Consultant)
Mr M Johnson (Works Manager)

Guests: Ms C Collop (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership)
Mr B Hancock (RSPB)

Before commencement of the Meeting, Mr Wray welcomed Barry Hancock of the RSPB, Catherine Collop Biodiversity Services Officer who had kindly agreed to attend the meeting and give presentations on their work in the Board's area.

449 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Curley, Mr Woodward, Mr Casswell and Mr Scott.

450 MINUTES OF LAST ENVIRONMENT MEETING

The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 16th May 2007, copies of which had been circulated, were presented to the meeting.

With regard to Minute No 333 Mr Fretwell stated that Mr Barker had declared an interest and left the meeting. The Chief Executive replied that Mr Barker had left the Board Meeting in July during the discussions, but had remained in the Environment Meeting in May. Mr Barker concurred with this and therefore it was agreed that this Minute was correct. The Chairman then signed the Minutes as a true record.

451 MATTERS ARISING

a) Owl Boxes – Minute No. 324a

The Senior Engineer reported that the Board continues to receive reports from the Hawk and Owl Trust on the number of owls and other birds that nest in the owl boxes at Pumping Stations. The Trust had forwarded data from the last three years which showed 10 boxes with owls and 43 young, 2 boxes with Hawks and 11 young and 15 boxes with jackdaw and 43 young over the last three years.

Mr Fretwell wondered whether the Board were following the right policy as owls predated water voles which were protected species, and this was causing an imbalance. Mr Hancock commented that in his experience it was unlikely that Barn Owls would take Water Voles out of the water. Mr Hancock promised to ask Mr Alan Ball of the Hawk and Owl Trust about this question. Mr Leggott asked what was the optimum population of Owls, and should we be thinking about removing boxes if we are creating an imbalance.

b) Diquat – Minute No 326a

Mr Fretwell stated that he did not consider that the Board should continue with the use of diquat on an experimental basis. Mr Leggott stated that Witham Fourth were not now allowed to apply diquat in their watercourses because its use had not been approved by the Pesticides Safety Directorate. The Chief Executive stated that Jonathan Newman from APMG is the leading authority on aquatic herbicides in the UK and his opinion is that diquat does not have any detrimental effect on the watercourse even though it reduces the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water for a short time, and it does control the growth of algae. The Board has approval for application in a small length of drain for experimental use, and it is worthwhile continuing this for a second year.

Mr Leggott commented that Witham Fourth IDB were trialling the use of ultrasound as an alternative control method for algae. Mr Robinson commented that he had heard that one IDB was trialling the use of glyphosate with a sticking agent. The Chief Executive responded that he was aware of this, but glyphosate is not suitable for use in controlling algae.

452 ADA LINCOLNSHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25th October 2007 – Agenda Item 4a

The Chief Executive presented the Minutes of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee held on 25th October 2007, copies of which had been circulated.

453 ADA LINCOLNSHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15th APRIL 2008 – Agenda Item 4b

The Chief Executive presented the Minutes of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee held on 15th April 2008, copies of which had been circulated.

a) Natural England

The Chief Executive reported that he had invited Dean Kirland who has been appointed IDB coordinator to this meeting and he had apologised that he was unable to attend.

454 REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE LAST YEAR – Agenda item 5

The Senior Engineer presented his report on work that had been undertaken by the Board over the last year, copies of which had been circulated.

a) Water Vole Surveys

Water Vole studies using our own workmen has been particularly successful. In Gosberton and part of Swineshead, evidence of the surveyed watercourses over the next five years will help us build up a picture of the Water Vole populations. All information will be forwarded to Lincolnshire Environmental Centre in Horncastle.

b) Environmental Enhancement Works

The Senior Engineer presented pictures showing the work that had been carried out at Drainside North. The Works Manager reported that the individual planting of reeds had not been as successful as before, but the work carried out in removing some trees had improved the accessibility to the drain.

c) North Forty Foot Drain

Planting has been carried out along the waterline of the repaired slip at this drain.

d) Flail Mowing at the Wyberton Marsh Drain

Following the success of early weedcutting over the last three years in the Wyberton Marsh Drain, this method of operation has been extended to a number of further critical watercourses where early control of weed growth is important. With this method the bank sides are flail mown on a regular basis commencing late March and three quarters of the bed is cut with a weedcutting bucket in June.

e) Mink Traps

The Board had tried to set up some mink traps but it was becoming very labour intensive and would require a man to deal with these traps every day, therefore it had to be abandoned.

455 BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN – Agenda Item 6

The Chief Executive presented the IDB Biodiversity Action Plan, copies of which had been circulated, and discussion took place on this.

Mr Hemmings stated that we are still waiting for the issue of the guidance from Defra on the IDB Implementation Plan. Last year we listed a number of targets which is a good way to measure what the Board has achieved. With regard to Thurlby Fen it was RESOLVED that the Chief Executive should look into developing these areas.

Mr Leggott commented that the Board should be careful that they are not planting invasive plants in the margins which will subsequently choke all of the channel. The Chief Executive responded that planting was only being carried out in watercourses with a bed width greater than 2.0 metres.

456 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY AND DRAINWORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 2008/09 – Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive presented his report on proposed work in 2008/09, copies of which had been circulated.

The Chief Executive recommended that six drains should be surveyed by Mr Harpley. Mr Leggott commented on Drain 2/6 Flinders Community Park could we give some thought to the use of more attractive planting, it was requested that John Harpley would advise and look into a recommendation on plants.

457 PRESENTATION BY CATHERINE COLLOP – LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST – Agenda Item 8a

Catherine Collop presented to the Committee, that she had been with the Biodiversity for six months now and there are three aspects of the action plan targets 2010 moving forward – Record, Centre and local wildlife. She attends habitat meetings and filters all the information back and highlights any gaps. The species records ie cray fish and invasive species which are very useful. She requested a specific contact with regard to the relationship with the Committee and requested someone from one of the Lincolnshire Drainage Boards attend habitat meetings which occur twice yearly to report on the training and water course maintenance.

458 PRESENTATION BY BARRY HANCOCK RSPB – Agenda item 8b

Barry Hancock in his presentation stated that he was very pleased with how successful the trial on the Wyberton Drain had been. The result of the Board's change in maintenance had been an increase in numbers of Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings. He explained that reed warblers were migrant birds which arrive in May and leave in September, and there overall numbers in the UK had fallen. The reed bunting is a resident species which is endangered, and any increase in habitat will reduce the decline of the species.

459 DISCUSSION PAPER ON REDUCING BOARD'S CARBON FOOTPRINT – Agenda Item 9

The Chief Executive presented a discussion paper on the Board's Carbon Footprint, copies of which had been circulated.

460 WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE – Agenda item 10

The Chief Executive presented a report on the consultations with the Environment Agency on the Water Framework Directive. He informed members that six months ago the EA had issued a map of water body areas for each Board, and these areas did not correspond in any way with the individual pumped catchments. IDB's had asked for a definition of what a water body area was, but this had not been provided. Boards had been asked at that stage to classify these areas as "Artificial" for "Heavily Modified", and the Board had responded that all areas within the Board's District should be classified as artificial.

All IDB's in the eastern area had last week attended a meeting organised by the Environment Agency. At that meeting a map of the eastern area had been presented showing the watercourses that the EA wished to look at. They asked Boards to consider whether these watercourses should be categorised as in "Good Ecological Status" or "Good Ecological Potential" by using spread sheets to come to this decision. This had to be completed by mid June.

The Chief Executive concluded that the WFD policy was being dictated nationally and this caused problems with low land areas.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.30pm.