

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 20th May 2009 at 2.30pm.

Members

Chairman - * Mr J R Wray

Mr R Leggott	* Mr R Welberry
* Mr M J Scott	Mr P Robinson
* Cllr D R Dickinson	* Mr F W C Holmes
Cllr J Blaylock	* Mr V A Barker
* Mr J F Atkinson	Mr K C Casswell

* Members Present

In attendance: Mr C A Fretwell (Southern Works Committee)
Mr S M Hemmings (Chief Executive)
Mr I Watts (Technical Engineer)
Mr J Harpley (Environmental Consultant)
Mr M Johnson (Works Manager)

583 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman referred to the recent death of Mr R J Watts, the Vice Chairman of the Board. Members paid their respects by standing for a minute.

The Chairman announced that Mr T Smith, of Lapwings Consultants, had agreed to attend the meeting but unfortunately had given his apologies due to illness.

Mr Alan Ball, of the Hawk and Owl Trust, had also been expected but had not arrived.

584 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Blaylock, Mr P Robinson, Mr K C Casswell and Mr R Leggott.

585 MINUTES OF LAST ENVIRONMENT MEETING

The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 21st May 2008, copies of which had been circulated, were presented to the meeting.

586 MATTERS ARISING

a) Owl Boxes – Minute No. 451a

The Chairman stated that as Alan Ball of the Hawk and Owl Trust had not arrived it was not possible to give an update on the number of owls that were nesting in boxes at Board's pumping stations. The Chief Executive was asked to obtain a report for the next meeting.

b) Diquat – Minute No 451b

The Chief Executive stated that Witham Fourth IDB were trying to obtain a special license to treat a number of their drains with diquat.

He informed the Committee that the Board had treated Clay Dyke and Gill Syke with diquat in 2007 and 2008. This was carried out under an experimental license obtained from Defra. He stated that this had had some success, but it was unlikely to be treated in 2009. In answer to a question about algal growth, Mr Harpley stated that the growth is encouraged by nitrates in the water.

c) Environmental Survey and Drainworks – Minute No 456

The Chief Executive reported that the proposed planting in the drain at Flinders Park had not as yet been carried out.

d) RSPB - Minute No 458

The Chief Executive reported that Mr B Hancock, who had for the last few years attended this meeting representing RSPB, had informed him that he was now unable to represent RSPB at meeting such as this. The Chief Executive recommended that the Board should ask Mr Hancock to continue his work on the Wyberton Marsh Drains on a consultancy basis.

587 ADA LINCOLNSHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29th October 2008 – Agenda Item 4a

The Chief Executive presented the Minutes of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee held on 29th October 2008, copies of which had been circulated.

a) Otters – Minute no 7

The Environment Agency are very keen to encourage otters and have requested feedback on local sightings to be disseminated into a Country Wide Survey. There has been no sighting of otters in the Board's area.

588 ADA LINCOLNSHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8th APRIL 2009 – Agenda Item 4b

The Chief Executive presented the Minutes of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee held on 8th April 2009, copies of which had been circulated.

a) Lincolnshire Environment Award – Minute no 4

The Chief Executive reported that Lincolnshire Drainage Boards had made a submission in the Lincolnshire Environmental Awards, which is based on the work with the Hawk and Owl Trust.

b) Water Voles – Minute no 8

The Chief Executive referred to revised guidance on working with water voles. He stated he was disappointed that trapping and relocation of water voles was still part of the recommendations. Mr Harpley stated that if this method was employed it could cost as much as £1,000 for each vole.

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

The Chief Executive 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

The Chief Executive reported that the Board is continuing to carry out these surveys and he presented a slide to the Committee highlighting the sightings. Mr Harpley stated that the BSIDB workmen have become very interested in the survey work and are to be commended on this which has helped the surveying process.

b) Badger Setts

Mr Barker brought to the attention of the Committee a number of badger holes which he has seen in the banks alongside the South Forty Foot Drain, and stated that this could cause breaches when water levels are high. High level of flood water could give the Board a severe problem. Mr Scott made the comment that at present the numbers of badgers in the Boards area has reached epidemic proportion. The Chief Executive

stated that it is very difficult to obtain a licence to do anything other than move the setts which consists of building them an artificial sett in a suitable alternative location. The Committee agreed that it would be advantageous to record the numbers and could ADA conduct a survey of all IDB's to monitor the amount of numbers of badgers in the region. The Chief Executive will take up this point at the next ADA meeting.

c) Early Flailmowing and Cutting Priority Drains

The Chief Executive reported that work was continuing with this but not doing so many of the drains as last year.

d) Mink Traps

The Chief Executive reported that there has been some success on the North Forty Foot drain, and four mink were caught. Trapping is only carried out after a sighting as due to the amount of time to monitor the trap there are only so many resources we can put into it. The number of sightings has declined in the last few months.

e) Azolla

The Chief Executive reported that last year the Board had a severe infestation and Mr Harpley has visited the North Forty Foot Drain last week and did not find any evidence and that the water was clear of Azolla.

Mr Harpley reported that there is a small patch in the Clay Dyke but that he was unable to determine if it was fresh growth or some left from last year.

590 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 he had arranged for a representative from Lapwings Consultancy (Mr Tim Smith) to attend the meeting but due to illness was unable to attend. Lapwings Consultancy have been tasked to write the Board's Bio diversity Action Plan. They will firstly review the Board's records and then set annual targets similar to those set out in the report presented to the meeting.

Discussion took place on whether the Board needed a publicity budget to allow additional publicity to be carried out. The Chief Executive stated that Lincolnshire Drainage Boards were exhibiting at Lincolnshire Show this year.

The Chief Executive stated that he had been approached by an organisation which arranges visits for teachers to businesses with a view to schools visits and a better understanding of business.

591 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY AND DRAINWORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 2009/10 – Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive presented his report on proposed work in 2009/10, copies of which had been circulated.

He commented that it may be necessary to employ another consultant to undertake the surveys if Mr Harpley was unable to carry out this work.

The Chief Executive reported that there could be opportunities for both flood storage and environment by widening drains, particularly in the Wyberton Marsh area. However the difficulty with this is the disposal of large amounts of excavated spoil. It was agreed that where this is required the Board should pay additional compensation to allow disposal of the spoil by spreading this across adjoining agricultural land.

592 WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE – Agenda item 8

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. The Environment Agency has produced detailed spread sheets of areas in 23 categories and each of these have to be categorised as in “Good Ecological Status” for the water quality. These spread sheets do not seem to be accurate and the Board needs to comment on these.

593 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Fens Waterways Link

Mr Barker stated that the next stage of the Fens Waterways Link could have an impact on the drainage of the southern part of the Board’s district. He considered that the Board should draw up a report stating the Board’s preferred route for the link. This would mean that the Board could benefit from the scheme.

The Chief Executive stated that the Environment Agency were planning to appoint a consultant to produce a report which would recommend a preferred option for the route from the South Forty Foot Drain to the River Welland.

b) Hawk and Owl Trust

The Committee asked the Chief Executive to obtain a report on the number of owls nesting in the Board’s boxes over the last twelve months.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.10pm.