

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Executive Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
4th June 2025 at 2pm

Members

Chairperson - * Mr P Holmes

* Cllr P Bedford
* Mr M Leggott
* Cllr D Middleton

Mr R Needham
* Mr M Rollinson
* Mr C Wray

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Projects Director)
Mrs A Chamberlain (Finance & Admin Director)

2483 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Committee members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2484 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Needham.

2485 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

2486 Minutes of the Meeting - Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2487 Confidential Minutes of the meeting - Agenda Item 5

Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2488 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 6

(a) Pumping Station Structural Review (Swineshead Pumping Station) - Minute 2415(a)

The Chief Executive noted that no funding was achieved directly for Swineshead Pumping Station, but some re-allocation of funds (from Gosberton Pumping Station) are to be used to develop the specification of the new pumping station at Swineshead (£500,000 in 2025/26 and £500,000 in 2026/27).

(b) Planning & Enforcement Officer Vacancy - Minute 2415(d)

The Chief Executive explained that the new recruit, Tessa Manning, is getting on well in her new role and is now starting to take main responsibility for the role, with Ian Warsap taking a step-back. The thanks of the committee, and Board, were noted for Ian helping with this work during the interim and all AGREED a letter of thanks to be sent to him expressing this.

(c) 2024/25 Plant Budget - new Bailey trailer - Minute 2415(e)

The Chief Executive noted that the Board are now in receipt of the new Bailey trailer and a weigher is to be retrospectively fitted to it.

(d) Felling of trees - Aswarby Estates - Minute 2415(f)

This matter is still currently with the Board's insurers, who requested evidence in support of their (Aswarby Estates) valuation in February 2025, with no response yet.

(e) Period 08 Management Accounts - Solar income - Minute 2416

The Chief Executive noted that all the work on the solar panels / invertors is completed. Discussion took place around the invertors, it being confirmed they either work or don't, they don't lose efficiency, but they can trip out of the exportation to the grid when faulty which needs to be monitored.

(f) Heavy Rainfall Event - January 2025 - Minute 2420

The Chief Executive noted that he has had a one-to-one meeting with Richard Tice MP.

In discussion around the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston), his response was *'if we get in county and the mayor, we will tell the Environment Agency (EA) to recommission the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston), and if they won't, we will'*.

The Chief Executive also discussed the Eel regulations with Richard Tice MP, who did do a media piece on the matter prior to the elections.

The Chief Executive also referred to the modelling being done by the EA around the decommissioning of the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston), noting that the EA have factored in that the Board stop pumping into the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) when levels reach 2.7m ODN. The Chief Executive continued that this is not accurate to what actually happens now; rather switch off entirely, the pumps are switched to an emergency pumping regime, meaning, although reduced pumping, they will continue to pump as required to keep to the level set. The Chief Executive suggested this needs to be considered within the EA modelling and that the modelling should perhaps not consider any reduction in pumping from the Board, noting this is something to be discussed further at their presentation meeting in June. It was also noted that the EA are aware of the ongoing court case around claiming for damage because the Board reduced pumping and have offered their support to the case.

2489 Receive a report on the Board's Brewin Dolphin portfolios - Agenda Item 7

It was noted that, unfortunately, James Scott of Brewin Dolphin could no longer attend this meeting, he is scheduled to attend the Executive Committee scheduled for September 2025.

The Chairperson noted that in only ten years' time, it will be 100 years since the Board was constituted.

2490 Review and approve accounts of Bourne Fen Farm Account - Agenda Item 8

It was noted that the accounts are very similar to what they were last year. It was noted that the value has increased over the past couple of months, but not substantially.

2491 Report on the 2024/25 Accounts - Agenda Item 9

The Chief Executive highlighted the following:

- Outstanding drainage rates at year end: £827.66 (0.05%) – thanks were passed to the Finance & Admin Director.
- Highland water contributions are lower due to a correction, funds received from the IDB recovery fund for electricity, from the previous year. Ensuring there is no double counting.
- Pumping Station Maintenance & Electricity combined – additional £162,000 going into General Reserves (without the IDB Recovery Fund money).
- Summer cutting – following representations from Board Members, investigation work into uncompleted summer cutting has been done, there will be enhanced monitoring going forward to ensure everything that should be completed, is.
- Admin % to Income is 8.8%.
- Wages Oncost Reserve – within the report there is a recommendation to reduce the recharge rate from 260% to 250% due to the substantial surplus. However, following discussion with the Chairperson, it is suggested that it would be beneficial to keep the recharge rate as it is until after salary reviews (including full workforce) in September 2025. Cllr D Middleton noted that just because there is a surplus he didn't believe it should be reduced. It was explained that this recharge is an internal process and so needs to be as close to 'zero' as possible, rather than generating a surplus. It was noted that this rate would be used to determine rates for external works such as Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) works, however, a different rate could be set for that. It was noted that aside from any salary increases, there is also an increase in National Insurance and the Board are currently in a tri-ennial valuation for pensions which may absorb some of the current surplus.
- General Reserves – the breakdown of the amount going into the General Reserves was noted, aside of Grant in Aid and IDB Recovery Funding, there is £1,269,000 going into the General Reserve. Cllr P Bedford questioned if the Allan House PS Scheme is underway? It was noted that the work is underway, the work within the ASDA carpark is complete.

The Chairperson noted that because of the IDB Recovery Funding, the next couple of years accounts are going to be completely unique. Cllr D Middleton noted that any way the Board can build their reserves is positive to hopefully be able to negate the need for large annual increases.

(a) Period 12 Management Accounts

The committee noted the Period 12 Management Accounts.

(b) 2024/25 Schemes Report

The schemes report was noted, with the following highlighted:

- Allan House Pumping Station – this work is ongoing, estimated completion August / September 2025.
- Bank Slips (IDB Recovery Fund) – the £113,000 carried forward balance is to be spent on replacing the soil used (3,630 tonnes). Mr M Rollinson questioned if the spoil from dredging is ever used? It was noted that this would involve testing it and having a waste transfer licence.
- Pumping Stations (IDB Recovery Fund) – all the pumping station schemes are waiting for pump and / or MCC Control panel installations, which have got an extension until September 2025 to be completed. The first connection offer from National Grid has now been received so, hopefully, this work can commence shortly.
- Mobile Pumps (IDB Recovery Fund) – all pumps purchased, now received. Existing 8” Godwin pump to be modified by DXB to operate correctly.
- Donington Northings Access Track (IDB Recovery Fund) – completed.
- Donington Northorpe Culvert Repair (IDB Recovery Fund) – completed.
- Embankment repairs (Damford PS, South Kyme PS, Ewerby PS, Trinity College PS) – all specifications now complete and contracts awarded.

(c) Draft 2024/25 Unaudited Financial Statements

The committee noted the draft 2024/25 unaudited financial statements.

(d) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025

The committee noted the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025.

2492 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Report - Agenda Item 10

The committee congratulated the Board’s Officers on the achievement of ‘Substantial Assurance’ again.

2493 2025/26 Budgets - Agenda Item 11

(a) Updated 2025/26 10 Year Schemes Budget

It was noted that those highlighted in red is the funding brought forward (as per the schemes report at item minute 2491(b)).

The Projects Director highlighted the following:

- Swineshead Pumping Station - No funding was achieved directly for Swineshead Pumping Station, but some re-allocation of funds (from Gosberton Pumping Station) are to be used to develop the specification of the new pumping station at Swineshead (£500,000 in 2025/26 and £500,000 in 2026/27). It may also be possible to achieve additional funding for Gosberton Pumping Station as well. Mr M Leggott felt that this was a lot of money just for a specification.

- South Kyme PS, Ewerby PS, Helpringham PS, Pinchbeck PS, Dunsby Fen PS Refurbishments & Ewerby Fen PS Embankment Repairs - Technical information issues required for the agreements with National Grid have delayed this work. The MCC and motor are received and stored but still to be installed. The first connection offer from National Grid has now been received, as soon as their invoice is paid, this will start their timeline for commencing work (their work should be complete by end of September 2025). However, the issue is going to be with Ewerby Pumping Station, which also has funding allocated for completing the embankment repairs, however, this work cannot be completed until National Grid have completed their works. Currently, the embankment repairs are scheduled to commence in August 2025, however, it is not looking likely that National Grid will have completed their works by then.

Mr M Leggott questioned who would be liable if the embankment works at Ewerby PS were not complete before another winter? The Projects Director noted that it isn't the fault of National Grid as they have been awaiting the technical information needed to complete the supply agreement. The technical information is related to the variable speed drives and has taken over six months to establish. However, now one agreement has been awarded, it should be a simple approach of duplicating it for the other sites. The only other option is if National Grid put in a temporary supply to enable the works. There will also be a cut off for starting the embankment repairs because of the potentially bad weather. The Chairperson questioned whether National Grid could assure the Board that they can complete their works over winter whilst the embankment works can't be completed, so that the embankment repairs can commence as soon as possible in the Spring 2026. The Projects Director noted that the temporary measure for Ewerby PS is to fill the void with concrete to prevent worsening. As soon as it is known that the embankment works won't be delivered, this temporary measure work will commence. The Projects Director noted he has no idea how much this would cost, as it is not known how big the hole to fill is. Mr M Rollinson noted that it is a big concern if there is a major rainfall event before the embankment works are complete. Cllr D Middleton questioned if variable speed drives are automatically used when replacing to allow for cost savings? The Projects Director explained that it is because the motors are being replaced that variable frequency drives are being installed which will enable an adaptability that the Board don't currently have (currently on or off). The Projects Director confirmed that this new variable speed ability should reduce electricity consumption and therefore reduce this expenditure, but without the IDB Recovery Fund the Board probably wouldn't be installing the variable speed motors.

- Bicker Fen PS and Kirton Marsh PS Control Cabinets - It was noted that originally both of these pumping stations had been identified to replace the control cabinets, however, this is now not financially viable. Kirton Marsh PS is therefore taking priority. It was noted that the Kirton Marsh PS supply is below ground level, however, if there is an issue with the supply it will be the responsibility of National Grid to resolve.

(b) Updated 2025/26 10 Year Plant Replacement Budget and report on replacement machines

(i) Flailing machine:

Energreen Alpha SPV - The Board currently have three Energreen SPV machines that are functionally brilliant at what they are designed to do (flail) but have had mechanical issues. Irelands Farm Machinery (local supplier of the machines) work on the machines for the Board, it is not always straight forward or quick, as there are often issues with supply of parts and some models have a Deutz engine which means Ireland's mechanics can't work on it. The Board's current three machines are different. The latest model, if the Board were to purchase (Energreen Alpha SPV) has the same hydraulics and electrics but has a John Deere engine (the Board's oldest Energreen SPV also has a John Deere engine and has proven most reliable of the three machines despite being the oldest). The lead time from purchase of this machine is 3-4 months at an estimated cost of £241,000.

Hooby - The Board currently has one Hooby machine which has proven reliable so far, with no major issues experienced, however, due to the IDB Recovery Fund works, it hasn't completed as much flailing as was expected. The mechanical support team of JCB and Hooby have been reliable. The lead time from purchase of this machine is 18 months at an estimated cost of £312,866.

Herder One - The Board do not currently have any of these machines, the Projects Director has seen one working and it looks like a good quality machine, however it is a lot more expensive than the other options, at an estimated cost of £399,000.

Cllr P Bedford referenced the JCB Hydradig that a neighbouring IDB have, it was confirmed that this machine would not be suitable as a flailing machine.

The Chairperson questioned if the operatives have been asked their preference? It was confirmed that they would prefer an Energreen because of the functionality (Energreen has an extra half a metre of reach compared to the Hooby). The Projects Director believed they may prefer the Energreen as opposed to the Hooby just because it is what they are used to operating.

It was further noted that the next flailing machine is due to be replaced in two years' time. Mr C Wray suggested the possibility of ordering both an Energreen and Hooby now because of the lead time of the Hooby.

The Projects Director noted that there are mixed reviews of the Energreen Alpha machines from those that have them currently, noting his concern about the mechanical issues experienced with the current Energreen machines and that the lifetime cost of the machine needs to be taken into consideration. Of the opinion that the Hooby will cost the Board very little over its life.

The Chairperson noted that there is an onus on Irelands Farm Machinery to prove that they can provide the mechanical support required efficiently for the Energreen machines. The Chairperson added that it seems the new Energreen Alpha machine has addressed some of the issues previously experienced e.g. having a John Deere engine which Irelands Farm Machinery can work on.

Mr M Rollison noted that the Hooby is the newest machine, and you would therefore expect to have the least problems with it anyway.

It was noted that the primary function requirement of this machine is to flail, based on reach and driveability, the Energreen SPV is the better machine for flailing. It was therefore suggested that the Board purchase an Energreen Alpha this time, and if it proves unreliable, then it will be Hooby going forward. The Projects Director noted that he felt the reduced reach of the Hooby is irrelevant because there is little work (majority EA work) that requires that length of reach.

The Chief Executive noted that if the committee wanted to purchase a Hooby for the replacement due in two years' time, they would need to place the order in January / February 2026 when the committee are reviewing the budgets, by which time the Energreen Alpha will have been received and working and a judgement on it can be formed.

All AGREED to purchase the Energreen Alpha SPV now, with the specification as per what the Projects Director deems appropriate. A report to be produced for the January 2026 committee meeting detailing its performance and comparison to the Hooby to consider a decision for the replacement required in two years' time (2027/28).

The Chairperson questioned if the Projects Director is happy to trade in two machines and reduce back to three flailing machines, the Projects Director confirmed that the Board no longer require the additional flailing machine that was only kept due to extra EA work at the time.

Mr M Leggott questioned if it is possible to have a more detailed breakdown of the running costs of each machine so that it is easier to compare and make a decision in the future? It was noted that this detail is broken down internally, but it would be difficult to present as a comparison for this as each machine is a different age.

The Chairperson added that it would be worth the Projects Director trying to get an extended warranty as a way of Irelands Farms Machinery showing their confidence in the machine.

(ii) Access Platform

The Projects Director explained that the Board's current nifty lift access platform isn't very manoeuvrable on uneven surfaces. It is therefore suggested to replace with a more versatile and manoeuvrable machine; the CMC S18F tracked access platform.

Mr C Wray noted that he has seen these working and that they are really good. Mr M Rollinson questioned whether the Board could get any contracting work / hire it out? The Chief Executive noted that he would have to discuss with the insurance because of liability.

All AGREED to purchase the CMC S18F tracked access platform.

(iii) 360 Excavator

Hitachi ZX210-7 - The original quote has been bettered to £196,850, with a trade-in value of £35,000 and lead time of November 2025. It was noted that the operator's preference would be Hitachi, with the reliability of it and residual value also noted.

JCB 220x Long Reach – Original quote (June 2024) £159,750 and trade in value of £30,000, still awaiting an updated quote.

The committee felt that, although the Hitachi is more expensive to purchase, the low running costs and residual value they hold make them as cheap over their lifetime. All AGREED to purchase a Hitachi ZX210-7.

(c) Updated 10-year estimates to reflect Scheme updates and 2024/25 year end position

The Chief Executive noted the figure of £1,828,128 (which is the figure based on the aim of being able to fund a minimum of two consecutive “wet” years of electricity from the General Reserve), which has been met with these 10-year estimates, primarily due to the IDB Recovery Funding received, allowing the Board to consider maintaining the rate at a lower increase.

2494 Review the Board's insurance cover in relation to business interruption and cyber - Agenda Item 12

It was noted that following a review of insurance cover by the Audit & Risk committee, they requested that the Executive Committee consider new cover for cyber security and enhanced business interruption.

Cyber – The Board currently has strong processes in place to try and prevent a cyber security attack but does not have anything in place to resolve it, should it happen. The Chief Executive also noted the computer crime element, which covers impersonation fraud.

The recent cyber-attack at a neighbouring IDB was noted, it also being noted that the Internal Auditor has conveyed he feels it would be prudent to take. All AGREED to cyber security insurance with a value of cover of £1million.

Mr C Wray noted the remote control of the pumps at pumping stations and whether this could be the target of cyber-attack with somebody taking control of the pumps and having the ability to turn them on / off causing damage? The Chief Executive believed not as it is in a de-militarised zone with signal via radio or sim card. The Chief Executive noted that he believed this would be covered by this insurance.

Business Interruption - The Board currently has this insurance but is limited to a twelve-month recovery period. It was felt by the Audit & Risk Committee that this period perhaps wasn't long enough if, for example, the offices were destroyed in a fire and needed rebuilding. All AGREED to increase to 24 months.

2495 To review compliance with The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009
Section 17 - Agenda Item 13

The Chief Executive noted that, previously, the Board has received exemptions (issued by the Environment Agency (EA)) for the Eels regulations, however, latest exemption received is for twelve months only and enforcement to be taken if no changes are made. The EA want the ten pumping stations categorised as 'high' (Black Hole Drove, Chain Bridge, Cooks Lock, Donington North Ings, Gosberton, Great Hale, Holland Fen, South Kyme, Swineshead, Wyberton) to have eel friendly pumps installed by 2030.

The Chief Executive has explained to them (EA) that this is not financially viable, given that the Board's pumping stations have syphons, which would not be compatible with eel friendly pumps, meaning the syphons would require removing which is civil engineering work which effectively means the Board would be building a new pumping station. For just the ten pumping stations alone, this could easily reach a cost of £200million. The Chief Executive added that if funding was provided to achieve this, then the Board would happily execute it.

The Chief Executive also noted the difficulty with liaising with the Area Fisheries Officer who is not very efficient at communicating, with the latest response displayed on screen, as follows;

'Sites that have received the latest time limited exemption need to work through the eel regulatory process to determine each sites "requisite" eel measure for IDB pumping station sites, it's likely to end up being "less damaging" pumps. As the point of contact for Lincs and Northamptonshire area I welcome discussing options site by site with engineers and consultants if needed.

Less damaging pumps – can be retro fitted to existing infrastructure, where this is proposed it needs to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as site specific of angled bends, siphon breaker valves and outfall arrangements can under some circumstances cause damage to eel. Control Panel infrastructure and the ability to have variable drive control is something that is required.

The pump and impeller are usually the main element of the pumping station site that cause the most damage to eel so this is the priority and a number of different suppliers are available.

We are taking a mosaic of dates approach and working in partnership with the IDB we want to see the measures integrated into future programmes of work to gain cost benefit.

You asked about legal process and what that would look like - The punishment of any offence under the regulations is a fine, which has no statutory limit either on summary conviction or on indictment.

The punishment can be against a body corporate and can also be against an officer of the company if there has been consent, connivance of that person, or of their neglect.'

It was noted that other IDBs and the EA (one department of the EA is enforcing on another department) are in the same situation and it was planned to hold a meeting in June between all the IDBs, the EA and the Area Fisheries Officer, however, a date has not yet been set.

The Projects Director noted that the Board are starting the process at Chain Bridge PS and Donington Northings PS, with a feasibility study being conducted around what / if eel friendly pumps can be installed within the existing civils / structure, without having to re-build the station.

2496 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 14

(a) Mobile Phone Contract

The Chief Executive outlined to the committee the poor signal that Vodafone are providing and that from a health and safety perspective (lone working device installed on mobile phones), a more reliable signal is required. All AGREED to move the mobile phone contracts back to EE.

(b) Fens 2100+ Spring 2025 Newsletter

The Chief Executive noted that this is included for information only and that he continues to represent Lincolnshire ADA Branch on the Fens 2100+ group.

(c) **CONFIDENTIAL – To receive a HR Update**

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

(d) Drone

The Projects Director noted that as part of the Environment Agency (EA) works, the operators have to complete ground nesting bird surveys for every section the Board maintain on their behalf. The Projects Director continued that unless there is a bird sat on the nest at the time, that could be seen from the top of the bank, or flew off on approach, the operator would not be able to spot the nests. A thermal imaging drone would be able to complete these surveys more efficiently and would also be able to complete some of the Board's own GPS work and LIDAR bank surveying work. A drone with thermal imaging capabilities is £6,719. The EA are investigating if they would be willing to contribute towards it through the PSCA work. (the Chief Executive felt a 50/50 funded split would be reasonable).

Mr M Rollinson thought that thermal imaging would work best during the evening when it is cool? It was confirmed that the surveys would have to be completed early morning, as thermal imaging works on temperature differentiation and would be completed by the Environment Officer.

All AGREED to purchase the thermal imaging drone.

(e) Rookfield Farm

The Projects Director noted that a draft design has been produced by the Board's Site Engineer which entails a three-metre-wide reduced level spillway with a scour-protected outfall. Matting or concrete will be used to prevent erosion. It will still be flat enough to drive over with a vehicle. The Projects Director noted that it will provide some benefit, but he is not sure it will cure the issue completely.

The Chairperson questioned if something temporary could be put in place firstly to assess if it will work? The Projects Director noted the difficulty that if there is no erosion control (e.g. matting or concrete) it will simply erode.

This work will commence prior to the cutting season (01 August).

(f) Car Park

The Chief Executive explained to the committee that there have been some drainage issues with the office carpark and so a device has been used to lift the gravel, which has helped. However, the gravel is sharp and is causing car tyre punctures. It is therefore suggested to scrape off the current sharp gravel and replace with 20mm round gravel. Mr M Leggott suggested that grey granite be used as it doesn't have sharp edges but also doesn't migrate as much as 20mm round gravel will.

(g) Co-opted Members

Mr M Rollinson noted that all three of the guests (Mr Stephen Pugh, Mr Brian Hammond, Mr Joshua Casswell) invited on the Northern Works Committee inspection have expressed their thanks for a very informative day and all expressed an interest in joining the Board. It was noted that there are three vacancies for co-opted members on the Northern Works committee. The committee AGREED to write to them to invite them to be a co-opted member. Mr C Wray noted he would also be interested in gaining Mr Richard Start as co-opted member in the future.

(h) **CONFIDENTIAL** – Director's salaries

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:56.