

# **BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **MINUTES**

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Board

held at the Offices of the Board on  
24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 2pm

### **Members**

Chairperson - \* Mr P Holmes

* Mr W Ash	* Mr G Atkinson
* Mr T Ashton	* Mr V Barker
* Cllr J Baxter	Cllr P Bedford
Cllr A Dorrian	* Cllr S Evans
* Cllr M Geaney	* Cllr A Hagues
* Cllr Z Lane	* Mr M Leggott
* Cllr D Middleton	Mr M Mowbray
* Mr R Needham	* Cllr R Pryke
Mr P Robinson	* Mr M Rollinson
* Cllr C Rylott	* Cllr D Scoot
* Mr C Wray	Cllr N Drayton

\* Member Present

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

#### 2497 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

#### 2498 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Mowbray, Cllr P Bedford, Cllr N Drayton and Mr P Robinson.

The Chairperson welcomed new appointed members; Cllr J Baxter, Cllr S Evans and Cllr R Pryke.

#### 2499 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### 2500 Minutes of the last Board meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board held on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2501 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 5

- IDB Recovery Funding - Minute 2425(b)

The Chief Executive presented on screen the total amount of IDB Recovery Funding achieved by the Board over the three tranches available. Work is ongoing and some time extensions have been granted by either six months or a year (concluding 31 March 2026). The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Board's Officer's for their work in achieving such a substantial amount of funding.

Tranche 1	Application	Awarded
Helpringham Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment	£ 219,709	£ 219,709
South Kyme Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment	£ 289,709	£ 289,709
Ewerby Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment	£ 419,709	£ 419,709
Dunsby Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment	£ 204,709	£ 204,709
Dyke Fen Pumping Station AWC Refurbishment	£ 25,000	£ 25,000
Pinchbeck North Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment	£ 164,000	£ 164,000
Donington Northorpe Culvert Repair	£ 155,000	£ 155,000
Electricity Costs	£ 452,936	£ 452,936
Catchment Wide Bank Slips	£ 1,060,830	£ 897,220
Donington North Ings Access track	£ 185,430	£ 185,430
	<b>£ 3,177,032</b>	<b>£ 3,013,422</b>
Tranche 2	Application	Awarded
Great Hale Pumping Station Refurbishment	£ 30,000	£ 30,000
Installation Level Controllers Pumping Station	£ 80,000	£ 80,000
Mobile Pumps	£ 250,000	£ 265,000
Damford Grounds Pumping Station Refurbishment	£ 155,000	£ 155,000
	<b>£ 515,000</b>	<b>£ 530,000</b>
Tranche 2b	Application	Awarded
Dunsby AWC	£ 247,000	£ -
Embankments Projects	£ 1,555,000	£ 1,555,000
Kyme Eau Embankment AT Damford	£ 105,346	£ 105,346
Gosberton PS Improvements	£ 1,168,700	£ -
	<b>£ 3,076,046</b>	<b>£ 1,660,346</b>
	<b>£ 6,768,078</b>	<b>£ 5,203,768</b>

- Planning & Enforcement Officer Vacancy - Minute 2425(c)

The Chief Executive informed the Board that this vacancy has now been filled, and Tessa Manning has now been in post for around six weeks. She is getting stuck into the role and is now starting to take the lead on this work.

Mr M Leggott questioned if she is up to date with historic 9 metre byelaw issues and whether she is generally met with compliance or resistance? The Chief Executive noted that all of the matters that Mr M Leggott has raised have now been dealt with.

- Plant - Hooby - Minute 2425(i)

It was confirmed that, as per minute 2493(b)(i), the Executive Committee agreed to purchase an Energreen Alpha SPV. It was further noted that Irelands Farm Machinery (local dealer) are now the sole importer of Energreen machines, removing Spearhead from the equation, which should improve the service received.

- Anglian Water Consultation Summary and holding message (Lincs Reservoir) - Minute 2430

The Chief Executive noted that the response to the Anglian Water consultation from the Board was submitted, but a response back from Anglian Water is still awaited. Every time they are approached about it, they simply respond that 'they will engage with the IDB'.

- January 2025 heavy rainfall event - Minute 2431

Representatives:

Morgan Wray (EA Area Flood Risk Manager in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire) and Katherine Samms (Senior Flood Risk Advisor) from the Environment Agency gave an update on the rainfall event as follows:

The EA is made up of head office function and local operation function. Head office deal with policy, liaison with Defra, managing the national capital programme etc. The local team deal with the catchment capital programme, liaison with IDBs on business case approval, forward plans and strategies etc.

It was explained that after flood events, reviews are carried out, analysing the data etc. of which this presentation is part of. Mr M Wray encouraged feedback and discussion throughout.

K Samms explained that in relation to the SFFD catchment January 2025 rainfall event, there are two reviews taking place; one for Billingborough and one for the SFFD and Boston. K Samms and M Wray gave a presentation.

#### Flooding in Billingborough

- The EA have produced an external document that sets out evidence for the EA view that the decommissioning of the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston) did not lead to flooding in Billingborough (c15 homes flooded between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January).
- The water took a long time to dissipate from the Billingborough area, needing aid from the local fire service high volume pumps.
- Billingborough sits on higher ground than where the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston) is located.

Mr M Leggott questioned what could be done to prevent properties in Billingborough flooding again?

Ms K Samms noted that it was a very extreme event and that there isn't a strong economic case for big engineering solutions due to there being so few properties affected.

Mr M Rollinson noted that Ms K Samms referred to it as a very extreme event, but noted it was not like Strom Babet, for example, questioning if this has been analysed at all? It was noted that this will be covered further in the presentation.

Ms K Samms continued the presentation:

- There are 3 main reasons why the Black Sluice Pumping Station cannot influence flows or flooding in Billingborough. These are:
- Time: the time that rainfall takes to move through the South Forty Foot Drain Catchment
- Ousemere Lode at Billingborough peaked 9.79mAOD at 09:00hrs on 6th January 2025
- Homes started flooding at 07:30hrs
- SFFD at BSPS at 09:00hrs on 6th Jan, much lower at 1.04mAOD. Peak flows had not reached here.
- Peak at BSPS not until 01:15hrs on 7th Jan, at ≈3.0mAOD

- Water levels in Billingborough had dropped by 1.69m by 01:15hrs on the 7th Jan
- Elevation: the height of Billingborough Village in relation to the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston)
- BSPS at 0mAOD
- Embanked channels in the SFFD Fen at 4mAOD
- Billingborough Village at 9-10mAOD
- For water backing up in the SFFD to affect Billingborough, it would need to rise to the level of the village. This would be 6m higher than highest ever recorded levels in SFFD.
- Distance: how far up the South Forty Foot Drain the effect of pumping at Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston)
- Black Sluice Pumping Station is around 27km downstream of Billingborough
- Diminishing effect on levels observed when BSPS
- Effect on levels unnoticeable beyond Donington Bridge (20km upstream of pumping station and 7.2km downstream of Billingborough).
- The EA have held public meetings in the village of Billingborough to discuss this (the locals assumed that there was a direct correlation between the decommissioning of Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston) and properties flooding in Billingborough).

Mr V Barker noted the tunnel under the railway line and that some people think that the inability for the water to discharge this way is because of this. Mr V Barker noted that he visited that morning, noting that the drain (Horbling direction) was full and that if more water had discharged, there would have been more properties flooded in the northeast of Billingborough. Mr V Barker continued that he understands there will be a need for more than the one reservoir (Lincs Reservoir) and made the suggestion of a balancing reservoir west of Billingborough integrated to both prevent flooding and hold water for the new reservoir/s. Mr V Barker concluded by noting the importance of combining things and that just because something isn't cost effective as a standalone scheme, it may be cost effective as part of a bigger picture.

Mr M Wray noted that the government currently has a consultation live, which is considering the funding mechanisms for flood risk management schemes. Adding that public funding is currently tight and so looking at innovative partnerships going forward will be vital. Established so far from the consultation is that schemes up to £3million could be fully funded (if they were in the government priorities) and anything over that amount would need 10% partnership funding.

Ms K Samms added that the EA have been working closely with Anglian Water on the Lincs Reservoir project to try and encourage them to provide benefit for the local area and they are looking at natural flood management and storage in the upper SFFD catchment.

Mr V Barker questioned what funding could be sourced from government to build an upstream balancing reservoir? Mr M Wray noted that as it stands currently, without doing detailed calculations, the general rule is c£30,000 per property at risk.

Mr R Needham questioned if the properties that flooded in Billingborough were new build? Mr M Wray noted that it was a mixture but did include a fairly new estate (most likely post-2012, therefore should have flood resilience built in).

Ms K Samms added that the old LIDAR has been studied and found that there would have been other channels where Billingborough is situated, the Ousmere Lode is not necessarily its natural course (straightened and deepened) and so the water has taken its old natural course.

Mr M Rollinson questioned if there were any local factors, e.g., blocked culverts etc.? Ms K Samms noted there were, but that it wouldn't have prevented the flooding but may have reduced the time it took for the water to dissipate.

Mr W Ash questioned if the drain was in good, maintained condition? Ms K Samms noted that maintenance work has been carried out, but it is probably not in the same condition as a Board maintained drain would be. There were some erosion issues on the river.

Mr W Ash felt the cheapest and most effective option would be to improve the outlet.

Mr R Needham noted the importance of regular maintenance. Mr M Wray acknowledged this, noting that one of the considerations around the formation of the new funding mechanism is around ensuring maintenance of existing assets. However, this may mean that there is reduction in the number of new schemes that can be developed.

Cllr R Pryke noted that Pointon was also affected badly during a recent event? The Chief Executive noted that the Board has been doing some work with South Kesteven District Council in relation to Pointon and have done some maintenance work on behalf of the council. There are also plans to put a diversion channel in around a property with a suspected collapsed pipeline, subject to the approval of the Crown Estate. The Chief Executive reminded the Board that both Pointon and Billingborough are outside of the Board's area and so therefore can't spend Board money within these areas.

Mr V Barker noted some raising of bank levels the Board did on behalf of the EA in Billingborough and questioned whether this work went far enough along? Ms K Samms noted that it was an extreme event and there will always be a case where it overcomes the defences in place.

Mr M Wray noted that climate change is an increasing issue, the EA Fens Climate Change Risk Assessment (available online) has highlighted that potential damages caused from flooding over the next 15 years could be up to seven times greater. This is why the work of the Fens 2100+ group is so important in trying to highlight this to the policy makers.

### **South Forty Foot Drain & Boston**

Ms K Samms continued the presentation:

- 36 homes reported flooding in Boston
- Wyberton West Road and Park Road flooded for 4-5 hours
- Large areas of agricultural land flooded
- At the time no fluvial flood warning available for Boston homes flooded

Potential causes of flooding investigated:

- Rainfall, preceding catchment conditions and river response
- High rainfall, but not the highest
- Frozen ground
- Winter vegetation = lowest interception
- Storm Henk and Jan 2025 – not the highest rainfall, but similar times of year and catchment conditions = similar response

It was noted that recently c40mm of rainfall was recorded at Swineshead PS, and no pumps were required to pump, due to the catchment and land being so dry, therefore highlighting the impact of catchment conditions. Mr R Needham noted the amount of rain falling in a very short period of time.

Mr M Rollison noted his concern that it was only 44mm of rain received and that the system should be able to cope with amount of rainfall, adding that if the likes of Storm Babet hit during these winter conditions, the impact would be a lot worse.

- Embankment seepage in Boston
- Observed and reported since 2021
- Assumed seepage became worse and contributed to water build up in flood plain
- EA Capital Maintenance project programmed prior to Jan 2025 for 2025/26 to address this (resin injections, Spring survey complete, another survey to be completed anytime). There is no agreed date for being on site to complete the works yet.

Cllr A Dorrian referenced the capital maintenance programme and whether that is a normal length of time from identifying the issue (2021) to the works being programmed (2025)? Ms K Samms responded that this can be the case, with bigger schemes, it can be longer (7-8 years). Cllr A Dorrian therefore asked if any remedial works are done in the meantime? It was confirmed that the sealant issues have been addressed, but there are no remedial works possible for the seepage.

Mr M Leggott noted that it looks like a modern sealant has dried out and failed, questioning if the EA can use product like black bitumen and tar-based products which would have a longer life. The EA representatives did not know this level of detail.

It was noted that it was not only seepage, but overtopping also occurred.

Flood walls in Boston:

- Likely 1960s construction, walls sit on a base slab on top of earth banks – no flow path cut off
- 2024 routine inspection identified settlement and joint failure

Overtopping of main river defences in Boston and the South Forty Foot Drain Fens:

- Clear evidence of overtopping at Dunsby, Quadring, Chain Bridge Road and Wyberton West Road
- Post incident survey of walls in Boston: eastern wall 2.8mAOD, western wall 2.88mAOD lowest points up to 2.94mAOD (all above the modelled 1 in 1000+CC20 of 2.764mAOD at Wyberton West Road)
- Peak levels recorded at Chain Bridge of 3.02mAOD at midnight on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Walls exceeded by 8 to 22cm
- Operation of Environment Agency flood risk assets
- Flows and levels normally controlled by Gate 1
- During high flows Gate 2 used
- Works to relocate automatic controls for Gate 2 taking place in December 2024 – manual operation

- 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 – Gate 1 gear box issue
- Gear box refurbished and put back in - manual operation while new part awaited
- Duty staff updated on temporary arrangements
- 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – low level alarms (could have resulted in environmental harm)
- 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025 – green flood guidance statement
- Night of 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025 – multiple alarms received
- Field team opened gate 2 fully at 04:13hrs on 6<sup>th</sup> January
- Field team opened gate 1 fully by 07:45hrs on 6<sup>th</sup> January
- Both gates fully open 16 hours before flooding in Boston, allowing discharge for a full tidal cycle before peak flows and levels reached Boston

Mr M Leggott questioned what prior evacuation of the SFFD was completed? Ms K Samms noted that the rainfall was not forecast, there were no warnings in place and so there was no warning.

Mr T Ashton questioned what time the gates would have opened if they were automatic as opposed to manual operation? Ms K Samms responded that this is being investigated.

The Chairperson questioned why both gates weren't opened at 04:13hrs on 6<sup>th</sup> January? The water levels would have been analysed at that time, and it was felt that opening just the one was sufficient. There were a lot of variables to consider, including balancing the risk of draining the water too fast (due to the recent low-level alarms). Further modelling is being done on this element and will help determine the future automatic control of the gates.

Mr V Barker noted that the weirs and rain gauges in the catchment should have indicated that the catchment was filling up and that water would be heading towards Boston. Ms K Samms noted that this was identified and therefore the decision to open the second gate was made.

Mr T Ashton noted his disappointment that it is now five months on from the event and there are still significant gaps in the data / evaluation. It needs to be confirmed what difference a different approach would have made, including the amount of water that can be discharged is identified, and, if this amount would not have been enough, what needs to change to be able to discharge it. Ms K Samms noted that the modelling check has been commissioned to identify this.

Mr M Rollinson questioned if the SFFD winter levels need re-evaluating? Ms K Samms was of the opinion that even if the winter levels were reduced, the capacity gained wouldn't have prevented the impacts. Mr M Rollinson therefore questioned if the desilting of the SFFD from Donington Bridge to Swineshead Bridge should be considered (to increase the capacity of the SFFD)? Funding constraints were noted, with Ms K Samms adding that surveys have been completed, with only small amounts of silt build-up identified. Adding that it doesn't actually provide that much more capacity and that a better alternative would be to hold it in the catchment through things such as natural flood management schemes, emergency overspill areas, etc. Mr M Rollinson noted that the Board already hold as much water as possible within the catchment system, highlighting that if the current ongoing court case is favourable to the claimant, the Board may not be able to reduce pumping and hold water in the

catchment, therefore discharging more into the SFFD. Ms K Samms further added that there is also ongoing work looking at storage options that could be achieved by with Anglian Water on the Lincs Reservoir.

Mr V Barker referred to the discharge at Boston, noting that, historically, there was a third sluice and that the main concern is around getting the water out and needing more capacity to do so. Mr V Barker was also of the opinion that the barrier is too narrow. Mr M Wray noted that unless there is a substantial change to government policy and funding eligibility, big schemes are not possible. Mr V Barker questioned the cost of removing the two pumps and opening it as a discharge channel? It was confirmed that it was a similar cost to refurbishing the two pumps. The Chairperson noted that if the cost is similar, there would be more benefit in refurbishing the pumps as the pumps could be used to discharge during a high tide.

Cllr M Geaney noted that she recalls, many years ago, that the EA announced they would no longer be dredging rivers, and the residents expressed their concerns around this but were assured it would have no impact. Cllr M Geaney referred to going 'back to basics', suggesting that you can't put the same amount of water in a container that is half full of silt as you would an empty container (SFFD). Mr M Wray noted the difficulty in demonstrating the benefit / value for money to achieve funding for works like this. Cllr M Geaney suggested asking the impact of the affected landowners would be a good start to demonstrating the need for it. Mr M Wray explained that with regards to funding, for a residential property, it can achieve up to 48pence in the £, compared to only 5pence in the £ for agricultural land.

Mr W Ash questioned the estimated cost of getting the two pumps running again? It was believed it was round £10million, noting that there were also structural issues with the building itself that needed addressing.

Mr T Ashton expressed his concern that the funding mechanism is based on protecting properties and not protecting acres of the best agricultural land in the country. Adding that it is not acceptable to flood properties every year, just because not enough has flooded to achieve the funding. Mr T Ashton noted his hope that Fens 2100+ will be a vehicle for change and that it is simply about improving the systems we've got in the face of climate change.

Ms K Samms noted that work is being done to understand what would be the best way of protecting those homes in Boston, with Mr M Rollinson adding that, in the face of climate change, the whole of Boston needs protecting. Mr M Wray explained that the policy is set by government, so the last five-year cycle was for c£5.4billion and was expected to improve protection for 330,000 properties. The EA then have to apply to try and achieve some of this funding, in the same way the Board do. It was highlighted that there is currently a consultation open around the future funding mechanism and criteria, which can be circulated to Board Members.

It was further noted that there is a project planned to look at all the defences in Boston.

Cllr A Dorrian questioned how many people are in the field team? It was confirmed that there are c20 that cover the Boston / Lower Witham catchment, and that it would be the Flood Incident Duty Officer (FIDO) making the decisions and instructing the field team on how to operate. The FIDO would be making decisions based on the set guidelines / thresholds. Cllr A Dorrian questioned whether any decisions would now be taken differently given all the data and knowledge that has been gathered since the event? Mr M Wray confirmed that it is not known whether the decisions made did

directly affect the houses flooding in Boston, which is why the modelling is being done, but there is nothing that would have been done vastly differently currently.

It was noted that the gates were not open for very long before the gates had to shut because of the tide.

- Operation of BSIDB assets and high level cut off arrangements
- Latest IDB emergency response plan, not fully reflected in EA incident procedures
- Only has Action 1: switch to emergency profile (assumed switch off) when levels reach 2.7mAOD and Action 2: pumps remain in emergency profile until levels reach 2.3mAOD in SFFD
- Action 3: if situation continues, board's pumping stations shall only pump sufficient water to hold water levels at emergency profile – not referenced in EA incident procedures
- May not be accurately represented in modelling
- Data supplied by IDB, shows continuation of pumping at most pumping stations, particularly in Boston due to extreme nature of event and need to avoid flooding from drainage system

Need to review:

- Is the Black Sluice IDB Emergency Response Plan accurately represented in the current modelling?

The Chairperson noted the current ongoing court case which, if found in the favour of the claimant, may mean the Board will not be able to reduce pumping at all. Ms K Samms noted that modelling would have to be done to then reflect this process. The Chairperson suggested it be included within this modelling. Mott McDonald are completing the modelling.

Mr M Rollinson questioned if it is known how much the Highland Carrier input into the SFFD and is included within the modelling? Ms K Samms responded that it will be known and included.

Mr M Wray noted that looking to the future, if it could somehow link rainfall to expected flows through, downstream pumping operations could then be timed appropriately.

Mr M Wray noted that the driver for funding criteria historically was based on agricultural land, which is not the case now. Mr R Needham emphasised that agricultural land needs to be recognised as an asset.

Ms K Samms summed up that although a model check has been commissioned through Mott McDonald but even though this has not been completed it is clear:

- the overtopping of the low banks of the SSFD would **not be** prevented by operating the Black Sluice Pumping Station during large events.
- Anything that occurs at the bottom end is **not having an impact** on the upper section of the SFFD. Water Levels diminish moving upstream which was noticeable at Donington Bridge and Dunsby where water levels were high. However, at Dowsby Fen Pumping Staton water levels were static despite the levels at Hubberts Bridge being susceptible to flows.

- Both the rainfall on 5<sup>th</sup>&6<sup>th</sup> January and catchment conditions, (soil deficits and frozen ground) led to the high run off seen in less than 24 hours causing river levels to flood and flood defences to fail. Historically there has been little funding for building and maintaining flood defences in rural areas.
- It is believed the impact could have been reduced but not prevented if a flood warning was available. Other models in nearby catchments e.g. Witham Grantham also showed it was an extreme event.
- The flood warning team are putting in place a new flood warning for the Wyberton West Road area and looking at the information they can use to trigger the warning. It should be coming online in July.
  - Defences could have been in better condition have a capital maintenance project due this year to improve that situation. Further reduction of high flows further up the catchment could elevate the extra water coming through the system.
  - We have Identified actions that would make our first response easier, but we don't believe it would have made a difference to the impact of 5/6<sup>th</sup> January.
  - The actions of the EA and the BSIDB prevented a worse situation.
  - It acknowledged the local water levels in SFFD could have been reduced by the operation of the pumping station. However, due to an economic decision made by partners of the Risk Management authorities and the asset was not available.

#### **Current Actions:**

- Undertaking Survey's & preparatory work for seepage capital maintenance project.
- The Wall joints seals have been replaced by the field team.
- The recovery works that had been delayed at Dunsby & Quadring have been completed.
- The review document has been completed, and copies are available. Copies have been forwarded to LCC to feed into their Section 19 statutory Flood reports.
- Updating the EA instant response procedures to make it easier for the duty officers going forward.

#### **In the Medium Term**

- The new flood warning system should be online in July.
- We have commissioned a model review and simulation of the January 2025 incident and by Christmas we should have some answers.

#### **In the Longer term**

- Implementing the seepage works.
- Reviewing emergency response plans once model check is completed.

- Discussing the possibility of making more space within the catchment for water to go through the AW Lincolnshire Reservoir Proposals.
- Update technology to the SFFD.

Mr P Holmes questioned if Mott McDonald come back with the modelling and it says the whole system could benefit from a third gate or refurbishment of the Pumping Station what would be the next course of action? Ms K Samms added they would try and make a business case to attract funding for that. It is expected to be unlikely, but if the evidence points to that it cannot be ruled out. Mr M Wray continued If there is evidence for an economic case it's their aim is to attract as much government funding as possible for Lincolnshire.

Mr D Withnall pointed out with the new flood funding, and now we have lived experience, is there likely to be more benefits available? Or have they been taken by the barrier? Mr M Wray noted the barrier didn't take all the benefits. The details will be how the system is prioritised going forward. Potentially it may mean looking for more partnership funding. But attracting grants will still have to demonstrate meeting the government priorities for funding, It's an agenda yet to worked out.

Mrs G Nichols highlighted the aim of the consultation is for risk management authorities (us) to work out the details. Currently there is no indication of value of agricultural land or residential housing, so we need to feed to the back on that consultation.

Mr P Holmes questioned if the EA are still happy to maintain the low parts of the SFFD bank levels at Quadring and Dunsby sacrificing the low spots. Ms K Samms pointed out if you raise one bit this then pushes it to next low spot. So, you're chasing your tail.

Mr V Barker highlighted one spot that was armoured but didn't flood, pointing out 'you didn't get the levels right'. Ms K Samms agreed that by armouring the low spots so we know where the water will go could be a better solution than raising the low spots. Something got lost in translation.

Mr D Withnall noted that landowners may not think that repeatedly flooding the same piece of their land the best option for them.

Mr P Holmes added what about the Board paying to pump water round in circles.

Mr P Nicholson questioned where the IDB will be in the future when its remit remains the same despite the 'goalposts' having moved. The IDB's problem is it has assets that 'on paper' have reached their design life when it cannot manage its catchment and does not know where to put the water. On top of that it faces the wet winters and dryer summers of climate change. Therefore, the IDB will have to attract funding for any asset that has to potentially last 40/50 years to carry out the same function. How do we make a decision for the future?

Ms K Samms noted economics are making less and less sense so with attracting funding getting more and more difficult it's sliding that bar for the same output.

Mr P Nicholson continued we can either stop the water getting there or be more effective of getting rid of it once it is there.

Mr M Wray noted the dilemma going forward is with infrastructure reaching the end of its design life what is it going to take to keep the system going? The Fens 2100+ is trying to put a case together for that.

Mr T Ashton stated after we have paid to drain our land in Lincolnshire by highland carriers how much water in the SSFD is ours? and how much is other peoples? If other people were paying as much as ratepayers, it could go towards closing the gap in funding. Mr M Wray pointed out the proportion of fenland land is a large proportion of the mass of England and a significant land mass draining through the Fens. This may be a question going forward.

The Chairman thanked Ms K Samms & Mr M Wray were thanked for attendance.

The Chief Executive further noted that he has received a request from the Spalding Guardian about the Board's opinion of the EA's stance. The Board AGREED for the Chief Executive to convey a message to the media in the vein of that the Board understand that the EA face funding challenges, but that more needs to be done to maintain the existing systems.

Mr M Leggott noted that the EA have discontinued funding for the IDB to carry out maintenance works on some their (EA) mid-consequence watercourses in their area. The Chief Executive noted that this will be discussed further in the agenda.

All AGREED for a letter of thanks to be sent to Morgan Wray and Katherine Samms of the EA, for their attendance.

2502 To receive the minutes of the following meetings - Agenda Item 6

(a) Environment Committee

The Chairperson of the Environment Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received

Matters arising:

• Fens East Peat Partnership – Bourne North Fen

It was noted that work on the Bourne North Fen scheme is likely to commence soon and is likely to overlap with the cutting season. This may mean that additional resources or overtime will be required to enable the timely completion of both.

It was further noted that the works are split into two phases. The Projects Director explained that phase one works sits comfortably within the skill set of the Board's operatives, but that phase two involves breaking into an Environment Agency watercourse to abstract water, which the Projects Director believed should be completed by somebody independent to the Board due to the Board not having the skill set for this sort of work, he will therefore discuss with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (leading on the work) and explain that the Board's preferred option would be to subcontract the phase two works.

To adopt the following:

(i) Environment Committee Terms of Reference

The Board RESOLVED that the Environment Committee Terms of Reference be adopted.

(ii) Policy 11: Biodiversity Action Plan

The Board RESOLVED that the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) be adopted.

(iii) Policy No. 53: Biosecurity

The Board RESOLVED that the Biosecurity Policy (Policy No. 53) be adopted.

(iv) New Policy: Conservation

The Board RESOLVED that the Conservation Policy (new policy) be adopted.

(v) New Policy: Working near badgers

The Board RESOLVED that the Working near badgers policy (new policy) be adopted.

(vi) New Policy: Working near water voles

The Board RESOLVED that the Working near water voles policy (new policy) be adopted.

(b) Southern Works Committee

The Chairperson of the Southern Works Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Southern Works Committee meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

• Flooding at Donington Road, Horbling Fen Drain 18/4 – Minute 2456(1)

The Projects Director informed the Board that works commenced on site this week.

• Sempringham Fen – leak from concrete pipe – Minute 2459(a)

The Chief Executive noted that the Works Manager and Site Engineer have visited site and are working on progressing this.

• Quadring Drain – Minute 2459(b)

The Chief Executive noted that the Board's Officer's have noted this with Lincolnshire County Council.

• Risegate Eau – Minute 2459(c)

The Chief Executive noted that this will be completed by hand during the cutting season.

To adopt the following:

- Southern Works Committee Terms of Reference

The Board RESOLVED that the Southern Works Committee Terms of Reference be adopted.

(c) Audit & Risk Committee

The Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

H&S Committee Meeting Page 69 – Add it's the Board's

To adopt the following:

- Audit & Risk Terms of Reference

The Board RESOLVED that the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference be adopted.

- Policy No. 1: Risk Management Strategy

The Board RESOLVED that the Risk Management Strategy (Policy No. 1) be adopted.

- Policy No. 33: Smoking

The Board RESOLVED that the Smoking policy (Policy No. 33) be adopted.

- Policy No. 35: Fire Management Strategy

The Board RESOLVED that the Fire Management Strategy (Policy No. 35) be adopted.

- Policy No. 39: Wearing of seatbelts in Board vehicles

The Board RESOLVED that the Wearing of seatbelts in Board vehicles policy (Policy No. 39) be adopted.

- New Policy: Maternity

The Board RESOLVED that the Maternity Policy (new policy) be adopted.

To approve the following:

- Internal Auditors Report 2024/25

The Internal Auditors Report 2024/25 was presented.

Mr M Leggott highlighted that the Board achieved 'substantial assurance' with no recommendations. Mr M Leggott, and the Board, thanked everybody involved in the achievement of substantial assurance in the internal audit.

The Board RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's Report be noted.

- Audit programme 2025/26

The Board RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's programme be noted.

(d) Northern Works Committee

The Chairperson of the Northern Works Committee presented the Minutes of the Northern Works Committee meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

• Ewerby Fen Pumping Station – exceedance rainfall events – Minute 2480(a)

The Projects Director gave an update on the embankment repair works at the four pumping stations (Ewerby, Damford, South Kyme and Trinity College), noting that there has been a delay in commencing works due to obtaining technical data for the new National Grid connection.

A contractor has been identified to complete the works, with works likely to commence first at Trinity College. The first connection offer has now been received from National Grid, so it is hoped the others will follow and works can commence on site at Ewerby in September.

▪ Invited Guests - Co-opted Members

Mr M Rollinson noted that all three invited guests, Mr S Pugh, Mr B Hammond and Mr Joshua Casswell, made a significant contribution to the inspection tour and have been invited to become co-opted members of the Northern Works Committee.

To adopt the following:

• Northern Works Committee Terms of Reference

The Board RESOLVED that the Northern Works Committee Terms of Reference be adopted.

• Executive Committee

The Chairperson of the Executive Committee presented the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

• Heavy Rainfall Event - January 2025 - Minute 2488(f)

The Chief Executive posed the question of 'should the Board be switching the Board's pumps to emergency levels / off during events?' Noting that the Board's pumps are for land drainage and is it the Board's concern to be turning them off because the Environment Agency's (EA) drain (SFFD) is full and the way of evacuating the SFFD has been decommissioned by the EA (Black Sluice Pumping Station, Boston). It was further noted that the total discharge capacity of the Board's system is 57 cumecs and the discharge capacity of the Black Sluice Pumping Station Boston is 60 cumecs.

• Report on 2024/25 Accounts - Minute 2491

The Chief Executive noted the little outstanding drainage rates at year end (0.05%). The Board thanked the Finance & Admin Director for this achievement.

- 2025/26 10 Year Plant Replacement Budget and report on replacement machines – Minute 2493(b)

The Board were informed that, as agreed at the Executive Committee, the following plant items have been ordered:

- Energreen Alpha SPV
- Access Platform CMC S18F Tracked
- Hitachi ZX210-7

- Compliance with The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 Section 17 - Minute 2495

The Chief Executive explained that for the past ten years, the Board has received exemptions from the Environment Agency (EA) from compliance with the above Eel regulations. The exemptions received this time are for only one calendar year, with a condition of creating a detailed and documented plan to protect the eels at the ten high priority pumping stations by 30 September 2025, for which they will then prosecute if the plan is not implemented.

The Chief Executive highlighted the cost difference to have new eel friendly pumps, as below:

Estimated cost to Retrofit  
10 Priority sites with Eel  
Friendly Pumps =  
£12,403,080

Estimated cost to Retrofit  
all BSIDB Pumps =  
£28,939,680

This does not include any  
pipework or Syphon  
changes which would  
require full rebuilds

	Refurbish	New, Eel Friendly Pumps
Pumps	£ 90,000	£ 945,113
Motor	£ 15,000	£ -
PTO Gearbox	£ 5,000	£ -
Motor Control Panel	£ 100,000	£ 334,389
Pipe Adapter Flanges		£ 11,464
Installation		£ 235,983
Project Management		£ 72,164
Siphon Breakers		£ 39,006
Board Officer Time	£ 100,000	£ 50,000
	£ 310,000	£ 1,688,120

The Chief Executive further noted that also in the long-term the current syphon pipework at the pumping stations would also potentially have to be changed, due to pressure change in such systems grazing the eels. This change would require extensive civils works and would probably require new pumping stations entirely. This would be an additional cost to the above (c£20million each).

The Chief Executive explained that he is trying to discuss this with the EA Fisheries Officer but contact from them is slow.

It was noted that there are other IDBs in the same situation, as is part of the EA.

Mr T Ashton questioned if this matter can be raised by ADA at a political and national level? The Chief Executive suggested he sends the details Innes Thomson at ADA, adding that he has also raised the matter with Richard Tice MP.

To approve the following:

- Period 12 Management Accounts

The Board RESOLVED that the Period 12 Management Accounts be approved.

- 10 Year Schemes Budget

The Board RESOLVED that the Capital Schemes Budget be approved.

- 10 Year Plant Replacement Budget

The Board RESOLVED that the Plant Replacement Budget be approved.

- 10 Year Estimates to reflect scheme updates and 2024/25 year end position

The Board RESOLVED that the 10 Year 2024/25 Budget and Estimates be approved.

2503 Approval of the Draft Unaudited Financial Statements for Year Ending 31 March 2025 - Agenda Item 7

The Board RESOLVED for the Chairperson to sign the unaudited financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2025.

2504 To review and approve the Annual Governance Statement - Agenda Item 8

The Board RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement be signed and approved.

2505 Approval and authorisation for the Chairperson to sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31 March 2025 - Agenda Item 9

The Board RESOLVED that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31 March 2025 be signed and approved.

2506 To review the Risk Register - Agenda Item 10

Those risks with a score of 6 were noted to the Board as follows:

- *Risk 1.1(b) - Fluvial flooding from failure or overtopping of defences*  
The Audit & Risk committee were of the opinion that until the embankment repairs at the four pumping stations (Ewerby, Damford, South Kyme and Trintiy College) are completed, the risk score should remain at 6.
- *Risk 1.1(c) - Flooding from failure of IDB Pumping Stations or excess rainfall*  
The Audit & Risk Committee were of the opinion that until the IDB Recovery Funding works are completed, the risk score should remain at 6.
- *Risk 1.10 – Insufficient finance to carry out works*  
The Audit & Risk Committee felt this should remain at a risk score of 6 and will be reviewed at their meeting in Spring 2026.
- *Risk 8.5 – Breach in cyber security inc. risk of virus being introduced to network*  
The Audit & Risk Committee felt that, although the Board are taking all the measures possible to prevent this occurrence, due to a recent cyber-attack of a neighbouring IDB, the risk score should be 6.

The Board RESOLVED the Risk Register be accepted.

2507 Reports on the following: - Agenda Item 11

(a) Monthly Accounts: (February 2025 - May 2025)

The Board's monthly accounts, inclusive of February 2025 – May 2025 were circulated.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(b) Monthly Accounts: Woldmarsh (January 2025 - April 2025)

The Board's monthly Woldmarsh invoices, inclusive of January 2025 - April 2025, were circulated.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(c) Schedule of Consents (February 2025 - May 2025)

The Chief Executive presented the Schedule of Consents, consisting of February 2025 - May 2025, copies of which had been circulated.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(d) Rainfall

The rainfall figures at Swineshead and Black Hole Drove were presented, copies of which had been circulated.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

2508 To receive the Fens 2100+ Spring 2025 Newsletter - Agenda Item 12

This was included for information, with the Chief Executive highlighting that the group are trying to put together a case for change for funding options to protect the Fens going forward, needed because of its unique landscape and food production value.

Mr R Needham referenced the Environment Agency (EA) Consultation about how the funding mechanisms will work going forward. The Chief Executive noted that he has not submitted a response yet, all the IDB's are meeting to collate a response as are the Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership and Fens 2100+ group.

2509 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 13

• Environment Agency (EA) Public Sector Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) Work

The Chief Executive reminded the Board of the PSCA work the Board completes on behalf of the EA. For a number of years, the Board has completed works (at least grass cutting) on all of the Highland Carriers under the PSCA for the EA. This year, this has been slightly reduced, with no order to carry out any work on

the Cliff Beck. In comparison, two local IDBs have received no orders for any of their usual PSCA work in their areas. However, they have been given the option to complete the work on the EA assets, but at their own cost rather than being recharged to the EA under the PSCA. It is understood that they are taking this approach in order to ensure the systems in their areas continue to work efficiently.

The Chief Executive therefore posed the question of whether the Board should complete works on the Cliff Beck (EA) at the cost of the Board? For a single summer cut this will cost £4,500 - £5,000.

The Chairperson gave his opinion that the Cliff Beck (EA) is in such a bad state that he doesn't believe one summer cut will make any difference to its efficiency. Further highlighting that there are established trees growing in it and that a cost to get it into a fit state of water conveyance would be useful.

Mr M Rollison also noted the terrible state of it, noting a recent housing development that discharges into the Cliff Beck but isn't conveyed efficiently, leading to flooding in Silk Willoughby. Mr M Rollinson added that the EA have allowed it to get into the state, so doesn't believe it is the responsibility of the Board to rectify it.

The Projects Director noted that this was one of the assets available in the Rationalising the Main River Network (RMRN) scheme a few years ago, but the Board would not take it on because of its poor state. The Projects Director added that he believes it will be a 'snowball' effect, and the EA will maintain less and less of their assets.

The Chief Executive noted that the Board could suggest to the EA that a lump sum would be required to restore it to a good state and then the Board would take future maintenance and responsibility for it.

Mr M Leggott noted that the Board can't afford to neglect the Cliff Beck (EA), but equally can't afford to take it on in its current poor state, so suggested the Chief Executive's above proposition would be the best way forward. Mr M Leggott also added that a neighbouring IDB are looking at changes in law to allow a rateable value to the areas where the EA maintenance is required to be able to fund it. The Chief Executive noted that the Cliff Beck (EA) is already in the Board's area and so is not a possibility for the Board.

Mr T Ashton noted that the EA have made it clear that they don't have the funding and so are walking away from maintenance on medium consequence watercourses. Mr T Ashton continued that if the Board are reliant on the outfall from the Cliff Beck (EA), the Board are the only organisation in a position to be able to complete the work.

The Chairperson noted his concern about setting a precedence and creating a 'snowball' effect.

It was confirmed that one of the housing developments will have paid into the Development Reserve which currently holds a value of £600,000, so some of this money could be used.

The Chairperson suggested that the next step be for the operations team to provide an estimated cost to return the Cliff Beck (EA) to better condition.

Mr T Ashton noted that he doesn't believe the EA will come to any other conclusion.

The Chief Executive referenced another time when the Board offered (to the EA) to fill in the gap next to the footbridge at Helpringham but were not allowed due to it not being the Board's watercourse, which if the Board took them on, would eliminate this issue. Mr R Needham noted that he believes the issue at Helpringham is that it needs de-bushing because the bushes are holding the water up.

Mr M Rollinson suggested that drone footage of the Cliff Beck (EA) would be helpful.

Mr M Leggott suggested that the EA are in need of solutions so may be able to find some funding to re-store it with a view to the Board then taking it on, but in the long term felt that the Board will have to increase the penny rate to fund extra works.

Mr G Atkinson questioned if the EA have notified the landowners that they have withdrawn from maintenance on the Cliff Beck? It was believed there hasn't been any communication with landowners.

Mr V Barker noted his concern that they will eventually all become the responsibility of the Board.

- Executive Assistant

The Chairperson informed the Board that this will be the last meeting the Executive Assistant attends before commencing her maternity leave, presenting her with flowers. Mr V Barker expressed his thanks for the work of the Executive Assistant.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:03.