

# **BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **MINUTES**

of the proceedings of a Joint Meeting of the  
Northern and Southern Works Committees

held at the Offices of the Board on  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 2pm

### **Northern Works Members**

Chairperson - \* Mr Mark Rollinson

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| * Mr Tom Ashton         | * Mr Paul Holmes     |
| * Mr Mark Leggott       | * Mr Robert Needham  |
| * Mr Peter Robinson     | Cllr Richard Austin  |
| * Cllr Peter Bedford    | Cllr Neil Drayton    |
| Cllr Stuart Evans       | Cllr Ralph Pryke     |
| Cllr Claire Rylott      | Cllr David Scoot     |
| * Cllr Suzanne Welberry | * Cllr Andrew Hagues |

#### **Co-opted Members**

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| Mr Michael Brookes | Mr David Casswell    |
| Mr Joshua Casswell | Mr James Emerson     |
| Mr Brian Hammond   | Mr James Pocklington |
| Mr Stephen Pugh    | Mr Roger Welberry    |

### **Southern Works Members**

Chairperson - \* Mr Chris Wray

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| * Mr William Ash     | Mr George Atkinson |
| * Mr Vic Barker      | Mr Mark Mowbray    |
| Cllr Margaret Geaney | * Cllr Z Lane      |
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- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| * Mr James Casswell | Mr Keith Casswell   |
| Mr Ross Dorrington  | * Mr David Leverton |
| * Mr Andrew Mair    | * Mr Mark Taylor    |

(\* Member Present)

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

The Meeting was chaired by Mr M Rollinson.

#### 2525 Recording the meeting – Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

#### 2526 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Evans, Cllr C Rylott, Cllr D Scoot, Cllr M Geaney, Cllr N Drayton, Cllr R Austin, Mr K Casswell, Mr D Casswell, Mr J Pocklington, Mr R Dorrington, Mr M Mowbray, Mr M Brookes, Mr G Atkinson, Mr B Hammond and Mr R Welberry.

2527 Declarations of interest - Agenda Item 3

Swarby Flooding – Enforced Actions

The Chairperson declared an interest.

2528 Minutes of the last meeting of the Southern Works Committee - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Southern Works Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered by the Southern Works Committee Members and it was AGREED the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

2529 Matters arising from the Southern Works Committee Meeting - Agenda Item 5

**Minute 2459 (page 10) Sempringham Fen – leak from concrete pipe**

Mr V Barker noted the difference in the item as it is a steel pipe sealed with concrete, and he is unsure if the EA have dealt with it. The Projects Director updated the EA have been to site. Mr V Barker will observe the work done.

**Minute 2456 (page 2) Flooding at Donington Road Horbling Fen Drain**

Mr James Casswell declared an interest.

The Projects Director updated on the Town Drain which is an EA drain that was taken on by the Board in 2017/18. For a number of years when heavy rainfall was experienced, the drain overtopped onto the road causing flooding to the adjacent property with the last event causing internal flooding to the cottages on Swaton Lane and one property on the edge of the village. It was agreed, in conjunction with the landowner to implement some overflow into the Boards system. Previously the Landowner cut his own channel in, what was EA bank, to allow some of that water to go into the Boards drain. It was agreed the Board would look at the levels of the bank along that section, as there is a low point on the side of the road further upstream that overtops onto the road, and we have set the spillway at 300mm lower than the lowest point onto the road and that will encourage it to overtop into the Boards drain and the northern catchment. The Projects Director noted in his opinion this will help but may not cure the problem.

Mr P Holmes questioned the difference in costs to the planned costs. The Projects Director explained the on-site discussions produced work than was different to the original plans. The Chief Executive pointed out it was not all funded by the board.

2530 Minutes of the last meeting of the Northern Works Committee - Agenda Item 6

The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Northern Works Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered by the Northern Works Committee Members and it was AGREED the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

2531 Matters arising from the Northern Works Committee Meeting - Agenda Item 7

**Minute 2481 Item 3 Emergency Response Plan.**

The Chef Executive updated on a claim which has appeared in the County Court.

The update from the Board's Solicitor was as follows:

*'The Court accepted Counsel's submission that the particulars of claim as drafted were inadequate and that expert evidence would be required if the Claimant wishes to pursue her allegations. The Judge has therefore ordered the Claimant to file and serve further and better particulars by 16<sup>th</sup> October'*

The Chief Executive expanded if there is no expert advice or no further allegations this claim will not go any further and could conclude in the Boards favour.

The Chief Executive continued this is a Ratepayer in East Heckington whose paddock was flooded and had to find temporary alternative accommodation for her horses. Plus, it was claimed the horse feed was also submerged. The Board visited site after reports that some access culverts were blocked, and it was found that there were no blockages. The Board doesn't believe they are liable, and the evidence submitted to the court would suggest as much. So far, we haven't had any costs.

The Chairperson noted how this would set a precedent and impact on the Emergency Plan and the Chief Executive highlighted this would mean anyone who was flooded in their garden or field could then make a claim. Therefore, this could be about considerable amounts of money and would not only impact on the Board but other IDB's and ultimately the Environment Agency.

2532 Update on IDB Recovery Fund – Finances & Delivery - Agenda Item 8(a)

The Projects Director updated where funds have been spent.

**Tranche 1**

(a - e) Helpringham Fen Pumping Station, South Kyme Pumping Station, Ewerby Fen Pumping Station, Dunsby Fen Pumping Station, Pinchbeck North Fen Pumping Station

All the detailed sites above are awaiting National Grid connections. Equipment is ready, but delays are due to wayleave issues and supply chain coordination. The goal is to replace motors that fail under high amps, preventing overheating and shutdowns.

Concerns were raised about investing in electrical upgrades at stations that might be merged or decommissioned in future catchment restructuring. The members

agreed that while long-term planning is essential, current operational needs must be met.

(f) Dyke Fen Pumping Station

The work on this site has been completed.

(g) Donington Northorpe Culvert Repair

The work on this site has been completed.

(h) Catchment Wide Bank Slips

Work has been completed.

(i) Donington North Ings Access Track

A new access road was built to avoid a problematic level crossing. Negotiations with Network Rail continue regarding the old crossing and culvert maintenance.

## **Tranche 2**

(j) Great Hale Pumping Station

The work on this site has been completed.

(k) Installation of water level controllers at various Pumping Stations

Funding was achieved to replace the water level controllers at various pumping stations. Radar sensors were used to replace outdated submerged sensors at sites like Dowsby Fen. This improves accuracy and resilience during high water events.

(l) Mobile Pumps

New mobile pumps (two 8-inch, one 6-inch) and fuel bowsers were acquired. These are critical for emergency response and supplementing station capacity.

(m) Damford Grounds Pumping Station Refurbishment

This was a retrospective bid for funding for work completed in August 2024.

## **Tranche 2b**

(n) Dunsby AWC

This project didn't achieve funding.

(o) Embankment Projects Ewerby Fen, South Kyme and Trinity College

These projects have experienced delays getting started due to contracting and logistical issues. Jackson Civil Engineering has been selected as the contractor, but final details regarding temporary works are still pending before contracts can be signed. Ewerby, in particular, faces complications due to the presence of a National Grid transformer that obstructs the planned flood wall installation. This has necessitated coordination with National Grid to remove the transformer before work can begin, pushing Ewerby's start date to late November or early December—an unfavourable time for such works. Originally estimated at £7.5 million, the total cost for all four sites has now been dramatically reduced to approximately £1.7 million, with Damford alone costing around £110,000. Despite the delays, the board remains committed to completing all works by March 2026 to meet the requirements of the IDB Recovery funding.

(p) Kyme Eau embankments at Damford Grounds Pumping Station

The Damford site was highlighted as the most straightforward of the four targeted locations, with piling works completed in August to prevent water seepage through the raised bank. This intervention involved installing a section of sheet piling within the existing embankment to block the flow path of water, and while early indications are positive, its long-term effectiveness remains to be seen.

(q) Gosberton Pumping Station improvements

The Gosberton Pumping Station was included in the list of infrastructure sites undergoing maintenance and refurbishment as part of the board's wider programme of works. While the update was taken as read during the meeting, it was noted that the station has received attention under the IDB Recovery Fund, which aims to restore and enhance operational resilience following recent flood events and long-term wear. Although no major structural failures were reported at Gosberton, the station's inclusion reflects a proactive approach to asset management, ensuring continued reliability in water level control across the catchment. The works at Gosberton are part of a broader strategy to maintain pumping capacity while awaiting the outcomes of the catchment-wide survey, which may influence future investment priorities. The board acknowledged the importance of keeping such stations operational, especially given the increasing frequency of high rainfall events and the pressure on downstream infrastructure.

2533 Update on Grant Schemes – Finances & Delivery - Agenda Item 8(b)

The Board Report for September 2025 is an indication of the funding achieved for each project.

(a) Sempringham Fen Pumping Station refurbishment

The committee received an update on the refurbishment works at Sempringham Pumping Station, which have now been completed. The project included the installation of a new weed screen cleaner and the replacement of a deteriorating headwall on the gravity channel. In addition, a manually operated tilting gate was installed to improve control over water levels and enhance the station's ability to manage gravitation from the catchment. The tilting gate, while currently manual, has been designed with the potential for future electrification, allowing for remote operation via telemetry if required. The refurbishment aims to provide greater flexibility in water level management, particularly in response to requests from riparian landowners for irrigation support. The board noted that while the station is not intended to function as a water storage facility, the improvements will allow for more precise control during high-flow events and seasonal variations. Safety enhancements were also made, including the installation of handrails and extended fencing around the new precast unit to ensure secure access for monitoring and maintenance.

(b) Allan House Pumping Station outfall repair - £1,077,033

The members received a comprehensive update on the ongoing repair works at Allan House Pumping Station, which have proven to be more complex and time-consuming than initially anticipated. The project involves tracing and replacing a failed section of outfall pipe that runs from the pumping station through the river bank discharging into the Haven. After extensive excavation and investigation, four new chambers have been installed to trace the pipe's route, including in Asda's car park and another near Irby Street. However, a critical section of pipe running beneath the railway line remains unsurveyed, and the board is hopeful

that no additional chamber will be required on Network Rail land, as this would introduce further delays and complications. In parallel, structural modifications to the pumping station building are underway, including raising the internal panel height by installing a flat roof, which is expected to be completed within the week, weather permitting. Despite the challenges, the board anticipates that the total expenditure will remain below the allocated £1 million budget, with the final phase involving the installation of new pumps and control panels once the outfall works are complete.

(c) Black Sluice Catchment Study - £385,000

The board received an update on the ongoing Black Sluice Catchment Study, which is a critical strategic initiative aimed at assessing the long-term resilience and capacity of the drainage infrastructure across the catchment. The study, which includes hydraulic modelling and climate change impact assessments, is expected to be completed by March–April 2026. Preliminary results have begun to emerge, particularly for the Swineshead catchment, offering insights into performance under various flood event scenarios. The board acknowledged that while the study may not drastically alter the current understanding of the system, it will provide a vital evidence base for prioritising future investment and refurbishment works. It was noted that even with the study's findings, implementation of any major changes could take 10 to 15 years due to the scale and cost of works required. The study will also inform decisions on catchment-wide capacity increases, especially in light of climate change projections, which may necessitate a 10% uplift in system capacity. However, concerns were raised about the practical limitations of such improvements, particularly when downstream systems like the South Forty Foot Drain are already at full capacity during high tide events. The board emphasised the importance of aligning future infrastructure upgrades with the outcomes of the study to ensure cost-effective and sustainable flood risk management.

(d) Wyberton Marsh Pumping Station New Transformer – Estimate £167,000

An update was provided on the transformer upgrade at Wyberton Marsh Pumping Station, which has encountered delays due to space constraints on site. Following a site visit with National Grid earlier in the year, initial plans for the installation were revised when it was determined that additional room would be required to accommodate the new equipment. As a result, the board is now in the process of negotiating the purchase of a small parcel of adjacent land—measuring approximately 5 metres by 2 metres—from a neighbouring landowner to extend the station's boundary. Discussions with the land agent have begun, with the board awaiting confirmation of the expected cost. This land acquisition is essential to enable the transformer installation and ensure the station's continued operational reliability. The board noted that while the area required is modest, the upgrade is critical to support future capacity and infrastructure resilience.

(e) Embankment repairs at Trinity College, Damford, Ewerby & South Kyme

These schemes are being completed as part of the Tranche 2b IDB Recovery fund as detailed earlier in the meeting.

(g) Swineshead Pumping Station replacement

The board discussed the urgent need to replace Swineshead Pumping Station following a structural assessment that revealed severe deterioration. Engineers expressed concern over the station's integrity, noting it is surprising the structure

remains standing, as it is uniquely founded on steel rather than the more robust concrete and steel combination used elsewhere. The station's condition is beyond feasible refurbishment, and full replacement is the only viable option. A preliminary design phase is underway, supported by £500,000 in funding, which will be used to explore pump type options and develop a feasible layout. However, this funding is unlikely to cover the full design process, and future financial support remains uncertain due to changes in the EA's capital funding programme. The estimated cost of replacement is between £10 million and £20 million. In the interim, the board is pursuing upgrades at Donington Northings and Chainbridge Pumping Stations to help alleviate pressure on the system, though these sites do not match Swineshead's capacity. The board also discussed contingency planning in the event of a total failure, noting that hiring temporary high-capacity pumps would be prohibitively expensive—estimated at £70,000 per week excluding setup and fuel—and would still not fully mitigate the impact. The board acknowledged the critical importance of progressing the replacement and securing long-term funding to avoid significant flood risk.

The board was briefed on significant changes to the Environment Agency's capital funding programme, which has transitioned from a six-year plan to a five-year rolling programme. This shift has had immediate implications for project funding, as many EA-led schemes that could not be completed within the original timeframe have now absorbed a substantial portion of the budget allocated for the first year of the new cycle. As a result, available funding for new projects in the coming year is expected to be extremely limited. The board noted that while most of its current schemes have retained their indicative funding, the Swineshead Pumping Station replacement has been excluded due to its status as not yet being in construction. Under the new funding model, refurbishment projects under £3 million will be eligible for 100% funding and can be signed off locally by the EA area manager. However, new construction projects exceeding £3 million will require a minimum 10% local contribution. The board expressed concern over the long-term impact of these changes, particularly for high-cost infrastructure replacements, and emphasised the need to strategically align future bids with the revised funding criteria to maximise success.

#### 2534 Update on Board Funded Schemes - Agenda Item 8(c)

The Projects Director updated on the Board Funded Capital Schemes.

##### (a) SFFD Desilting Guthrum to Black Hole Drove PS estimated £105,000

The channel in this area has experienced significant silt build-up, particularly near the pumping station where the channel widens, making conventional damming techniques impractical. To address this, the board is considering the use of specialist contractors to install temporary dams and manage water levels during the works. The desilting will be carried out using large hydraulic machinery capable of lifting and depositing the material, a method proven effective in previous operations. In conjunction with the desilting, a structural inspection of Black Hole Drove Pumping Station is planned to assess the condition of the pumps and the station's overall integrity.

##### (b) Jetting to Major Pipelines - £40,000 estimate

The board was informed that jetting works on major pipelines are scheduled to commence within the next three weeks. ADC has been appointed to carry out the

programme, which will be closely supervised to ensure thorough completion across all targeted locations.

(c) Blackhole Drove PS under pump Inspections - £35,000

Inspections are to take place for structural inspection survey works to be carried out, as detailed in the earlier item at 2534 (a)

(d) North Forty Foot desilting - £20,000

Work is to commence in 2025/2026 and continue 2026/2027 to lower water levels and remove silt from the watercourse.

(e) General culvert replacement contributions - £5,000

The Budget allocated is for Board contributions where we use a culvert. It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain watercourses and enable access to their land.

2025 / 2026 Pumping Station Schemes

(a) Kirton Marsh PS replace MCC – Estimate £80,000

The replacement is due to take place during February / March 2026.

(b) Kiton Marsh PS replace syphon valve – Estimate £5, 000

The valve has been replaced well within budget.

(c) Horbling Fen PS 1 x pump motor refurb – Estimate £4, 000

This has been completed.

(d) Holland Fen PS 1 x pump motor refurb – Estimate £5,000

This has been completed.

(e) Great Hale Fen PS 1 x pump motor refurb – Estimate £5, 000

This has been completed.

(f) Cooks Lock PS AWC refurb – Estimate £95, 000

We have the equipment just waiting for an installation date.

(g) Great Hale Fen PS replace MCC – Estimate £85,000

This installation was due to be completed early 2026 but it is hoped that the work will be completed for the end of 2025.

2024 / 2025 Funded Scheme

(a) Peat Restoration Project – LAPSIP (Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot) - £172,000

The members received an update on the successful implementation of the Lowland Agricultural Peatland Water Level Management Infrastructure Programme (LAPSIP), funded through DEFRA's peat protection initiative and administered by ADA. The scheme involved the installation of solar-powered control units connected to tilting gates, allowing for remote water level management via telemetry. These units were installed with custom-built walkways to ensure safe access for monitoring and maintenance. While the gates are not expected to require frequent adjustment, the board acknowledged the importance of occasional operation to prevent mechanical seizure. The

inclusion of remote operability was made possible through the funding package and reflects a forward-thinking approach to water level control in sensitive peatland areas. The board noted that although the installation phase faced last-minute challenges, the scheme has been well received and represents a positive step in enhancing environmental resilience and operational flexibility.

2535 Update on Current Cutting Programme - Agenda Item 8(d)

The board received an update on the progress of the summer cutting programme, which is being closely monitored through weekly reporting and mapping tools on the board's website. As of the most recent update, approximately 62% of flailing and 49% of cutting has been completed, which is considered a strong position for this point in the season. However, recent mild and wet weather conditions have accelerated vegetation growth, particularly in high-consequence drains, prompting the need for additional cuts. Notably, the Wyberton Pump Drain has already required a second cut and is likely to need a third—an unusual occurrence that highlights the impact of changing seasonal patterns. While this may increase operational demands, the board noted that savings from reduced pre-season cutting earlier in the year, due to prolonged dry conditions, may help offset the additional costs

2536 Update for 2025/26 Winter Maintenance – possible change in approach- Agenda Item 8(e)

The members were updated on the upcoming winter desilting programme, which has been set at an ambitious target of 94 kilometres—significantly higher than the typical annual figure of around 75 kilometres. This increase reflects the need to address areas that were deprioritised during the previous year due to the focus on IDB-funded structural repairs and emergency works. The programme will be delivered over the winter period and may need to be phased across two years depending on ground conditions and availability. The members noted that improved reporting from operational staff and enhanced surveying capabilities—particularly through the use of GIS mapping and targeted inspections—have helped identify priority areas for intervention. These areas have been marked in red on the maps and will guide the deployment of resources. There was emphasis on the importance of maintaining flow capacity and reducing flood risk across the network, especially in light of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

Bushing to also be completed during winter maintenance.

2537 Report on Cliff Beck Maintenance - Agenda Item 8(f)

The members discussed ongoing concerns regarding the Cliff Beck watercourse following the Environment Agency's withdrawal of maintenance funding. Historically maintained under a Public Sector Cooperation Agreement, Cliff Beck now faces significant vegetation overgrowth and reduced conveyance capacity, particularly in light of increasing upstream development such as the Handley Chase housing scheme. Drone footage presented to the board revealed extensive blockages and poor visibility of the channel, raising serious flood risk concerns for downstream areas. The board estimated that restoring Cliff Beck to IDB standards would cost approximately £577,000, a figure deemed unsustainable without external support. There was also concern that improving

conveyance could exacerbate flooding further downstream, particularly at the junction with North Beck. As a temporary measure, the Executive Committee has agreed to clear vegetation to enable further surveying and assessment, but emphasised that this does not constitute a commitment to long-term maintenance. The Environment Agency's current proposal to manage flows via a flood storage reservoir near Mareham Lane was met with scepticism, with members questioning its effectiveness and long-term viability. The board will continue to monitor the situation and engage with stakeholders, including MPs and local authorities, to seek a sustainable resolution.

2538 Enforcement Actions - Agenda Item 9

The board was informed of recent enforcement actions undertaken to address non-compliant activities within the district. Tessa has been actively issuing information and action notices to landowners and third parties where breaches of board byelaws or unauthorised works have been identified.

2539 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 10

The board raised serious concerns about the potential flood risk posed by reservoir discharge coinciding with high tide and fluvial events, particularly affecting the South Forty Foot Drain. Members stressed that while such events may be statistically rare, their impact could be catastrophic, and therefore must be properly accounted for in the Environment Agency's risk modelling. It was confirmed that the EA is currently running a simulation using real data from the January 2025 flood event to test the accuracy of its 2018 model, with results expected by the end of the year. Additionally, a full catchment study incorporating climate change allowances—such as a 10% increase in drainage capacity—is scheduled for completion in 2027. The board emphasised the importance of ensuring these studies reflect realistic worst-case scenarios to inform future infrastructure planning and emergency response strategies.

There being no other business the meeting closed at **15:25**.