

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Board

held at the Offices of the Board on
9th December 2025 at 2pm

Members

Chairperson - * Mr P Holmes

Mr W Ash	* Mr G Atkinson
Mr T Ashton	* Mr V Barker
Cllr S Evans	* Cllr P Bedford
* Cllr M Geaney	Cllr A Hagues
* Cllr Z Lane	* Mr M Leggott
* Cllr R Austin	* 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
Cllr S Welberry	* Cllr J Cantwell

* Member Present

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

2562 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2563 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Evans, Cllr A Hagues, Cllr N Drayton, Mr W Ash, Cllr S Welberry and Mr T Ashton.

The Chairperson welcomed the newest member Cllr J Cantwell to the Board, and acknowledged the other new members Cllr S Welberry (who was not at the meeting) and Cllr R Austin.

2564 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

Mr V Barker declared an interest in minutes 2555 and 2561.

2565 Minutes of the last Board meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board held on the 24th June 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2566 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 5

- Minute 2501 - IDB Recovery Fund original minute 2425(b)

The Projects Director updated on the refurbishment work

- i) Ewerby Fen Pumping Station

The new electricity supply has been successfully relocated, and the site is now ready for installation of pump motors and the new control panel.

- ii) South Kyme Pumping Station

The refurbishment work will be imminent once there has been an update. The same team will be completing the work.

The other three sites are in a National Grid area, and we are waiting for an update on that work. The delay may be due to wayleaves, and we shall hopefully work together with them to move the project forward.

- Minute 2431 - January 2025 Heavy Rainfall Event.

The board discussed the outstanding issues related to the flooding of 36 homes in Boston. It was noted that the Environment Agency's simulation report, comparing actual events during Storm Babet, Storm Henk, and the floods of January/February 2024 and January 2025 against predictive models, is still awaited. The models significantly underestimated the extent of flooding, highlighting inaccuracies in 2018 Model. The report has been promised before Christmas, and pressure has been applied to ensure timely delivery. Additionally, the BBC will feature Boston's flood risk on a national segment of BBC Breakfast, following findings that 16% of local flood risk assets are below standard—the highest proportion in the country. The board reiterated concerns about the inadequacy of the current funding model for flood defence and emphasized the need for continued partnership and advocacy once the simulation results are published.

- Minute 2431 - Mrs G Nichols highlighted the aim of the consultation.

In November guidance was due of how the Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding was going to operate going forward. This will now be delayed until January 2026. The guidance is for the new funding regulations that launch in April 2026.

- Minute 2502(d) – Compliance with Eels regulations original minute 2495

The Chief Executive explained how the exemptions are due expire on 31st March 2026. The regulation conditions were that an agreement would be made with the Area Fisheries Officer of how the Board would comply with the eel regulations. This was for priority sites by end of September 2025. Despite the dialogue with the Area Fisheries Officer, who covers the whole of the Eastern area, we are still not in a position to agree a programme and will see if the exemptions are renewed in April 2026

2567 To receive the minutes of the following meetings - Agenda Item 6

(a) Executive Committee

The Chairperson of the Executive Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the 16th September 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

- Minute 2517 Health & Safety Investigation Summary

The board received confirmation that the recent health and safety investigation has been completed. Additional measures and staff training have been implemented to address the findings and strengthen workplace safety practices. The Health and Safety Executive has reviewed the case and confirmed that no further action will be pursued at this time, indicating that the board's response and corrective actions have been satisfactory.

- Minute 2518 Period 4 Management Accounts & Narrative

The two cases of rate payers who were part paying their drainage rates due to only part of their drains being cut last year have now paid their rates in full. The Chief Executive will follow up these cases to ensure they are satisfied with the cutting this year.

- Minute 2520 Future maintenance of the Cliffe Beck EA main River.

The Chief Executive updated a drone survey of the Cliff Beck was requested by the Board at the June meeting. This was carried out and presented to the Executive in September who gave authority, with the permission of the EA, to cut the drain to see what the issues were and have a better idea of the state of the drain. The Cliff Beck had not been maintained for over two years. Examples were shown on the screen. The drain is not to the standard of an IDB drain but can convey water and the flow of water is not too bad. £577,000 would bring this water course to the standard of an IDB drain but it may be improved with £23,000. This information will be sent to the EA that the Board can make a difference for this funding. So far the cost to the Board is £3,300 for the survey and for the Hitachi to clear the vegetation.

Mr V Barker questioned if a culvert would be put in for the Boards access to the right in the private land drain. The Chief Executive declined this suggestion as it's an EA water course.

The Chairperson noted that even if the £23 thousand is doubled to £50,000 that is still better than the £577,000.

Mr M Leggott questioned if the EA would be prepared to pay the £50,000 rather than the £577,000.

The Chief Executive responded as the work was done at the Boards request the conclusions have not been sent to the EA yet. The aim is to send the footage and suggestions this week. At the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) local

choices meeting recently it was indicated that medium consequence water courses will be 100% funded if the RFCC put in the £1.5 million of local levy funding. As the Cliff Beck is a medium consequence water course the Chief Executive therefore assumes the annual maintenance will be funded for next year, but this is yet to be confirmed. The Chief Executive will send the slides to the EA suggesting that with £23 thousand the Board thinks it can make a big difference with the annual maintenance continued.

Mr M Rollinson pointed out, it may not be wise to rush into doing anymore at the moment. As we don't know the impact the actions will have downstream. The Helpringham Eau is already not in a good state with some homeowners downstream who have been flooded more than once.

Mr R Needham highlighted he and a group have a quote to trim the bushes from Helpringham Bridge to Little Hale Fen. One of the group questioned if an IDB dispensation would be possible. Mr R Needham rejected the idea as it is an EA problem. Instead suggested to the Board if the riverbanks could be cut on both sides it would eliminate the problem in the future.

The Chief Executive pointed out that as it is an Environment Agency watercourse we can only do as they request.

- Minute 2524 Electricity Renewal

The Chief Executive updated once VIP Communications had refreshed their quotes they found there were some additional standing charges they had not included for, which meant they were considerably more expensive. Npower, through Woldmarsh had already included these charges, so the Board stayed with NPower for the renewal for one year.

- Minute 2524 Website

The Chief Executive updated the website refresh will be a similar colour scheme with a dark background and light writing with an increased contrast to ensure we meet the accessibility requirements in April 2026. The website will also be modernised and easier to navigate.

- Minute 2524 IT Support

The Chief Executive updated the issues encountered with HBP had been resolved and there was a positive way forward. So, the renewal was with HBP. However, as of this morning another issue arose with the server being unsupported. The server was due to be replaced in April but may need to be done much sooner.

- Minute 2524 Earning Statistics

The Chief Executive updated the 2026/27 pay award was agreed at the ADA Pay and Conditions Committee at 5.0%. This has also been agreed by ballot of the UNISON members and approved at the Lincolnshire ADA branch.

To adopt the following:

(b) Joint Works Committee

The Chairperson of the Joint Works Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Joint Works Committee meeting held on the 7th October 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

- Minute 2531 Matters arising from Northern Works Committee

The Chief Executive updated the outstanding Court Case will be going to a full Court hearing in February 2026. Therefore, we will have a decision on how we go forward.

(c) Audit & Risk Committee

The Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on the 28th October 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

To adopt the following:

(i) The Annual Return including External Auditor's Opinion for 2024/25

It was noted there was no non-compliances.

The Board RESOLVED that the Annual Return including External Auditor's Opinion be adopted.

(ii) Policy No. 3: Financial Regulations Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Financial Regulations Policy (Policy No. 3) be adopted.

(iii) Policy No.15 Employees Code of Conduct

The Board RESOLVED that the Employees Code of Conduct policy (Policy No. 15) be adopted.

(iv) Policy No.16 Fraud & Corruption Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Fraud & Corruption policy (Policy No. 16) be adopted.

(v) Policy No.20: Officer Car Loan & Electric Car Scheme Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Officer Car Loan & Electric Car Scheme policy (Policy No. 20) be adopted.

(vi) Policy No 30 Pension Discretion Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Pension Discretions policy (Policy No. 30) be adopted.

(vii) Policy No 42 Near Miss Reporting Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Near Miss Reporting policy (Policy No. 42) be adopted.

(d) Structures Committee

The Chairperson of the Structures Committee presented the Minutes of the Structures Committee meeting held on the 13th May 2025, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

Matters arising:

- New Chairperson

The Board RESOLVED that the Structures Committee Chairperson was elected unanimously as Cllr P Bedford.

- Minute 2555 Quadring Fen original minute 2118(b)

Mr V Barker stressed there is still nothing happening at Quadring Fen. The Headwall is not the problem it's the tunnel itself.

The Projects Director highlighted there are no further updates on this matter and LCC are monitoring the situation. The Chief Executive noted this is an LCC tunnel and there is nothing we can do unless it causes a blockage. Mr V Barker stressed when there is ice in tunnel he will provide the Board with more pictures.

To adopt the following:

(viii) Structures Terms of Reference

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

(i) Policy No 08 Relaxation of Board Byelaw No 10 (The 9 Meter Byelaw)

The Board RESOLVED that the Relaxation of Board Byelaw No 10 (The 9 Meter Byelaw) policy (Policy No. 8) be adopted.

(i) Policy No 58 Piping Policy

The Board RESOLVED that the Piping policy (Policy No. 58) be adopted.

Cllr Z Lane questioned if there are many culverts in urban areas around people's homes. Further, is there a policy on how we educate people, so they know the location of the culverts.

The Chief Executive responded in urban areas there is probably more concentration of culverts and pipes than anywhere. Some may have riparian responsibilities but generally in urban areas it would be the risk management authority's responsibility. Guidance is available for riparian responsibilities from the Environment Agency and Lincolnshire County Council but not a great deal for culverts. If a culvert supported someone's driveway it would be obvious who is responsible but if it was something else, they would be looking for an alternative agency to take responsibility

The Projects Director updated many householders are not aware of their riparian responsibilities. The Black Sluice do send out guidance for Riparian responsibilities when its requested.

The Chairman asked if that information would come up on property search engines when buying a property. The Project Director response that it should, but we do make a request the information is included within the title deeds.

The Chief Executive updated certainly on planning issues we include a request the information is included within the title deeds.

Cllr Z Lane questioned if the Black Sluice keep in contact with those effected.

The Chief Executive responded that there are too many.

2568 Consider response from Anglian Water from Phase 2 Consultation Feedback - Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive updated on Anglian Water's response dated 16th October to the Boards feedback from the Lincolnshire Reservoir Phase two consultation engagement. The two items that prove to be unresolved are:

- Firstly, the emergency drawdown element and
- Secondly, the removal of water from the SSFD, how this would benefit the Board and the comments on the quality of the water in the SSFD.

If the water quality is not good enough to go into the Reservoir, this means the pipe will have to go from the Witham to the Reservoir. An emergency drawdown, whether it be test or even a fluvial event will mean the water will have to go to the sea and that issue causes serious concern. We will encourage Anglian Water to respond on this and that our concerns are taken seriously. The SFFD is not our drain, and therefore the Environment Agency need to agree with our viewpoint and impose restrictions where necessary. The delivery of this project is now gaining momentum as previously the Fens Reservoir had made more developments.

Mr V Barker updated another way for Lincolnshire Reservoir to transfer the emergency drawdown to tidal water which he hoped can be taken forward to Anglian Water. His research highlighted reports on flooding from 1936, the late 1950's and in the 1960's. One proposal which was the preferred option in 1960 was to build a Dam in the SFFD and a new drain through Surfleet Fen which would then join with the Risegate Eau. The water would then be transferred out into the Welland, which was a shorter distance and lower level to transfer to the tidal water. From the map supplied by Mr V Barker and illustrated on the screens, this route would be largely available today. Mr Barker felt this option was not completed at the time due to economic decisions made by the Black Sluice IDB. Mr V Barker commended this suggestion to the Board for consideration. It is hoped that this idea can be taken forward to the Reservoir team with its other advantages pointed out.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be put to Anglian Water for them to note the concerns.

2569 To review the risk register - Agenda Item 8

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

- **Risk 1.1(b) – Fluvial flooding from failure of overtopping of defenses.**

The committee reviewed the risk of fluvial flooding due to failure or overtopping of defences, particularly with the Environment Agency still controlling the South Forty Foot and known bank issues. It was agreed that this risk remains high and should stay at a score of 6. Risk 1.1(c) Flooding from failure of IDB pumping stations or excess rainfall. This risk remains high.

- **Risk 1.4 Risk of failure of Boards Pumping Station.**

The risk of flooding caused by pumping station failure was considered significant, especially given ongoing structural concerns at Swineshead Pumping Station. The committee recommended maintaining this risk at a score of 6

- **Risk 1.10 Insufficient finance to carry out works.**

Following discussion, this risk was reduced from 6 to 3. The availability of funds from the flooding relief program has enabled the board to address several bank slips and other urgent works, improving financial resilience.

- **Risk 8.5 Breach in Cyber Security including risk of virus being introduced to network.**

Despite robust cyber protection measures and backups, the committee agreed that the risk of a cyber breach remains high, referencing recent incidents at major organisations. This risk will remain at a score of 6. Risk 8.7 Loss of accounting records.

The potential impact can be low and the score becomes 1

- **Risk 8.8 Loss of rating records.**

Due to improved cloud-based backups, the risk associated with losing accounting and rating records was downgraded from 6 to 1. The committee concluded that such a loss would now have minimal impact. The committee AGREED that the Risk Register be accepted (with the changes to be made as per the Risk Management Strategy).

2570 To receive a report on Finance & Admin - Agenda Item 9

(a) Period 07 Management Accounts

The Finance & Admin Director presented the Period 07 Management Accounts highlighting as of the end of October, over 96% of drainage rates have been collected, reflecting strong progress in revenue collection. The project summaries show significant underspend, primarily due to timing delays on schemes where expenditure was expected earlier but will still occur. Electricity costs are notably lower than forecast, with savings exceeding £81,000 against the original budget. Summer maintenance remains underspent but is gradually catching up. Investment values continue to improve, indicating positive performance in financial assets. No further issues were raised, and the remainder of the report was taken as read.

The Board RESOLVED that this Period 07 Management Accounts be approved.

(b) Drainage Rate Report

The Finance & Admin Director presented the Drainage Rate Report. This report includes the Drainage Rate Revaluations and Drainage Rate Write Offs both needing full Board approval.

The Board RESOLVED to approve the revaluations and write-offs, and further RESOLVED to approve the recommendation to delay recovery of low-value drainage rate accounts

(c) Quarter 2 Forecast

The Finance & Admin Director presented the Quarter 2 Forecast. The board noted a slight reduction in the estimated drainage rate income, attributed to earlier drafts and revaluations. To manage potential cost fluctuations, the remaining balance for pumping station operations and maintenance has been reallocated across the remaining months, providing flexibility for higher electricity costs or unforeseen expenses. Overall, the forecast indicates that the board will require approximately £266,000 less from reserves by year-end compared to the original budget, reflecting improved financial performance. All other items were taken as read.

The Board RESOLVED that the Quarter 2 Forecast be approved.

(d) Lincolnshire Pension Fund – Black Slice IDB 2025 Valuation Results.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted. The triennial evaluation of the pension fund shows a positive outcome, with the board's contribution rate reducing from 23.6% to 18.2%, ensuring the fund remains sufficient to meet current and future pension obligations. Historical deficit payments for additional years previously granted to former employees have now been eliminated; these payments were approximately £60,000 annually six years ago, reduced to £8,000 last year, and will cease entirely from April. This places the board at an equilibrium regarding past and future liabilities. While this is a strong position, it was noted that contribution rates could change at the next review in three years.

2571 To receive the Annual Report on Health & Safety including Near Misses - Agenda Item 10

The Health and Safety Committee report was presented in the absence of the Maintenance Director. The committee continues to operate effectively, with representation from employees at all levels and a board member, promoting shared responsibility for safety. A positive trend was noted in near-miss reporting: whereas none were recorded four to five years ago, there are now significant numbers being reported. While not all meet the strict definition of a near miss, this proactive reporting allows the committee to review incidents and implement measures to prevent accidents. Employees are encouraged to report without fear of repercussions, supporting a just culture. Additionally, the board is investing in extensive health and safety training, as shown on pages 135–136, to ensure staff have the skills and knowledge required to maintain a safe working environment.

2572 Reports on the following: - Agenda Item 11

(a) Monthly Accounts: (June 2025 – October 2025)

The monthly accounts for June 025 to October 2025 were presented.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(b) Monthly Accounts: Woldmarsh

The Board's monthly Woldmarsh invoices, inclusive of May 2025 - September 2025, were presented.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(c) Update on Enforcement Actions Taken June 2025 to October 2025)

The Chief Executive presented the update on Enforcement actions from June 2025 – October 2025.

The Chairperson noted this is the kind of work we are doing and including the information in Board papers keeps us informed.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(d) Schedule of Consents June 2025 to October 2025.

The Schedule of Consents was presented.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted

(e) 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.

2573 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 12

(a) Fens 2100+ Summer Newsletter

The board noted that the Fens 2100 initiative is gathering momentum, with significant engagement taking place with key partners, including Lincolnshire County Council. A recent presentation was delivered to the Council's Scrutiny Committee, and work is ongoing to align Fens 2100 with other regional strategies such as Humber 2100 and Lincs Coast 2100. There was a suggestion to link the programme with Thames 2100 to potentially access additional funding; however, caution was advised. Concerns were raised that such an alignment could render Fens 2100 an insignificant partner within a much larger scheme focused on the Thames Barrier replacement, which may not deliver tangible benefits for the Fens region.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:00