

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Board

held at the Offices of the Board on
10th February 2026 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)
Mr S Harrison (Maintenance Director)
Mrs A Chamberlain (Finance & Admin Director)

2586 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2587 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Ash, Mr G Atkinson, Mr R Needham, Mr M Rollinson, Cllr J Cantwell, Cllr N Drayton and Cllr C Rylott.

2588 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest

2589 Minutes of the last Board meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board held on the 9th December 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2590 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 5

- Minute 2566 Original Minute 2501 IDB Recovery Fund

(i) Ewerby Fen Pumping Station

The Projects Director updated that despite the inclement weather experienced in recent weeks, contractors were coordinated as previously agreed, and the installation of the new control panel and pump motors at Ewerby Pumping Station has been successfully carried out.

All of the Board's mobile eight-inch pumps were deployed to Ewerby Pumping Station to maintain water levels. Under normal operating conditions these pumps would have been sufficient; however, due to the scale of the rainfall event, additional pumping capacity became necessary. To support the Board's response, Mr David Caswell loaned a tractor, enabling the operation of a pump via PTO, which was run overnight to supplement the mobile pumps. This combined effort ensured that water levels remained under control throughout the incident.

The Chairman recorded the Board's thanks to Mr Caswell for his assistance, and a formal letter of appreciation will be issued.

Action Point: The Board to send a letter of thanks to David Casswell for the loan of his tractor.

(ii) South Kyme Pumping Station

The Projects Director reported that a new duct has been installed on site to accommodate the incoming supply cable. National Grid had provisionally scheduled the transformer installation and associated supply change for 23 March. However, this work will need to be deferred due to concurrent embankment repair activities being undertaken by Jacksons, which would result in conflicting personnel on site. The supply change will therefore be rescheduled to commence once Jacksons have completed their works.

(iii) Dunsby, Pinchbeck & Helpringham Pumping Stations

The Projects Director reported that progress on the remaining three sites—Dunsby, Pinchbeck and Helpringham—remains dependent on the completion of outstanding wayleave agreements and Environment Agency flood risk activity permit applications. All associated works have been fully paid for, as noted at previous meetings, and the Board is otherwise ready to proceed. Once the necessary legal and regulatory matters are resolved, dates will be scheduled for the works to commence.

- Minute 2431 January 2025 Heavy Rainfall Event

The Chief Executive reported that the Environment Agency's local officers had advised that the ongoing simulation modelling work is currently running approximately two weeks ahead of schedule. Although the modelling had originally been expected before Christmas, the Agency now anticipates completing its internal review imminently. The Board should therefore expect to receive the finalised outputs within the next couple of months.

- Minute 2431 Grant in Aid Funding

The Chief Executive reported that the Environment Agency had not yet issued the updated guidance for the forthcoming flood defence grant-in-aid funding procedures, which are due to take effect on 1 April. The guidance was originally expected in November, subsequently delayed to January, and has now been postponed again with a timescale of before 31 March.

Although the timetable remains challenging, the Chief Executive noted that during the previous refresh of the process the guidance was not received until six months into the financial year, and therefore the current position still reflects an improvement on past experience. The delays relate to the national Environment Agency team rather than local officers.

- Minute 2520(d) Compliance with Eel Regulations

The Chief Executive reported positive progress regarding the Eel Regulations. The Board has now received exemptions for all high-priority sites until 31 December of the year following the planned refurbishment works, providing additional compliance flexibility.

Chain Bridge and Donington North Ings are currently progressing through the process for the installation of less damaging fish and eel friendly pumps. The exemptions provide approximately nine months of additional operational breathing space, ensuring the Board remains legally compliant during the transition period.

The Projects Director further advised that, due to the hydrological connection between Donington North Ings, Swineshead and Chain Bridge via the Hammond Beck, the team is exploring whether a single eel pass installation may satisfy the regulatory requirement for all three sites.

- Minute 2520 Future maintenance of the Cliff Beck EA Main River

At the request of the Chairman, the Chief Executive provided an overview of the role of the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) for the benefit of new members. The RFCCs were established under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and there are nine committees nationally, with the Board falling under the Anglian Northern RFCC.

RFCCs are locally based bodies intended to provide a more informed assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk within their respective areas, enabling more effective local prioritisation than could be achieved through national decision-making alone. They influence the Environment Agency's allocation of national funding and oversee the setting of local levies.

IDB's in the Anglian Northern Region currently contribute to RFCC funding through a precept of approximately £2.2 million, which has remained unchanged since 2009. Additional funding comprises around £1.6 million from county and unitary authorities through local levies, with the remaining approximate third coming from the general drainage charge applied to agricultural land occupiers outside IDB boundaries. Although IDBs contribute over one-third of the RFCC's income, they do not have direct representation on the committee, aside from members with indirect IDB affiliations.

Mark Leggott confirmed that his final RFCC meeting will take place in July, with new appointees expected to be announced in due course. Appointments are made by a panel comprising the RFCC Chair, Environment Agency officers, and an RFCC member.

- Minute 2524 Website

The CEO updated the new Board website is currently being built with the payment method being tested today. The driving force for this activity was to ensure the website would be compliant with the new accessibility regulations for the public sector digital and technology platforms. Other pages that are being developed will make the whole website more aesthetically pleasing including pictures in the News feed making it more manageable. The aim is to launch the new site well before 1st April ready for the intake of drainage rate payments.

- Minute 2531 Court Case arising from the Northern Works Committee

The Chief Executive provided an update on the recent County Court proceedings involving a ratepayer from the Heckington area. The case related to the overtopping of a Board-maintained drain adjacent to the individual's property, which had required her to relocate her horses on two occasions during Storm Babet in October 2023 and again in January 2025. The Board's internal complaints process had been completed prior to the ratepayer issuing a formal claim through the County Court. Although the NFU and the Board's solicitors initially persuaded the claimant not to proceed, she later pursued the matter to a full hearing. The Board's insurer appointed counsel, and the trial took place last Thursday. The claimant elected to have her husband act as a lay representative, a decision that was not well-received by either the judge or counsel; however, the trial continued and lasted about two hours. The Court found that Internal Drainage Boards operate under permissive powers with respect to drainage and flood risk management and do not have a statutory duty to undertake such works, as set out under Section 14A of the Land Drainage Act 1991. A written judgment is awaited.

The Environment Agency has expressed interest in the outcome, which is expected to clarify the application of permissive powers nationally and will be shared with other IDBs in due course. Although the claimant suggested the matter was "not over," counsel advised that no leave to appeal is likely to be granted. The claimant may attempt further recourse through the Local Government Ombudsman or the Lands Tribunal, although the latter would have been the appropriate route initially.

The judgment, once issued, is expected to stand and will provide a helpful precedent.

No application for costs was made, as it was considered unlikely that the Court would award them as legislation limits recoverability for local authorities.

- Minutes 2573 AOB Fens 2100

The Chief Executive provided an update on the FENS 2100 Project, a multi-agency partnership led by a dedicated Environment Agency team and involving representatives from local authorities, Natural England, ADA and Internal Drainage Boards. The project is examining the long term future of the Fens, with particular focus on the funding and sustainability of ageing flood risk management infrastructure. The Chief Executive confirmed his participation on the Programme Board alongside senior

representatives from the Environment Agency and other partner organisations. Additional IDB representation includes Innes Thompson (ADA), Karen Daft (Welland area) and Paul Burrows (Great Ouse area), collectively ensuring strong sector involvement. Significant work has been completed on the development of baseline reports, assessing the current condition, economic value and national importance of the Fens including agriculture, transport, energy and wider infrastructure. These detailed assessments feed into a 20 page Case for Change document, setting out the urgent need for strategic investment in existing systems to prevent long term land loss and to secure sustainable funding models. The baseline summary and Case for Change documents are scheduled for release on 18 March, with a formal launch event to be held at Westminster, hosted by ADA, to engage MPs and key stakeholders. The Chief Executive advised that these are the principal documents members should review, noting that the remaining technical papers are extensive and primarily for detailed reference

2591 To receive the unconfirmed Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the 21st January 2026, copies of which had been circulated. - Agenda Item 6

The Chairperson of the Executive Committee presented the unconfirmed Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the 21st January 2026, copies of which had been circulated. The Board RESOLVED that the Minutes should be received.

- Minutes 2579 Original Minute 2021 10-year Plant Budget

- (i) Energreen Alpha

- The Projects Director reported that the new Energreen Alpha machine has undergone an initial PDI inspection and will receive a further inspection once it has been put into operational use. At present, all indications are that the machine is performing as expected. It was further confirmed that the existing machines have been traded in in accordance with the terms of the purchase.

- (ii) Ride on Mower

- The Projects Director confirmed that the Board has now purchased the new ride-on mower. Delivery is expected within the next couple of weeks, and the machine will be registered for road use from 1 March, ensuring it is ready for the start of the forthcoming cutting season.

- Minutes 25812026/27 Budget and Ten-Year Estimates

The Chief Executive reported that, following longstanding difficulties in securing the installation of an electricity meter for the EE mobile equipment on our mast, an issue ongoing since 2016, the meter has now been successfully fitted. Once the supplier has calculated historic energy usage, a backdated payment is expected covering the period from 2016 to the present, after which billing will proceed on an actual-usage basis. The Chief Executive will provide a further update upon receipt of the backdated sum and advise on proposals for its allocation.

- Minute 2585 (c) RSPB Frampton Marsh

The Chief Executive reported on discussions with John Badley, Manager at RSPB Frampton Marsh, regarding ongoing difficulties with water management at the site. The RSPB's pumps failed during the previous summer; these units, which transfer

water from the Board's drain into the above-ground reservoir that supports key bird habitats, had been replaced, however, the new pumps were installed without the required dry-run protection, causing them to operate without water and subsequently burn out. They are currently being repaired under warranty.

The Chief Executive noted that the RSPB pumps operate at approximately 140 litres per minute, a relatively low rate, and have been out of action for over nine months. As a result, water levels at Frampton Marsh are significantly depleted, with much of the site resembling mudflats rather than open water. This has been exacerbated by one of the driest summers on record. Maximum water levels are normally reached by the end of March, but the continued pump failure has left the site severely short of water, posing a risk to breeding waders and associated food sources.

The Board has capacity within the environmental budget, and the Executive Committee has agreed to loan a mobile six-inch pump to the RSPB. This unit is capable of moving approximately 85 litres per second, vastly exceeding the throughput of the existing RSPB pumps. It is estimated that, with this support, water levels could be restored within a couple of weeks.

The Chief Executive highlighted that this assistance will not only support the immediate ecological needs of the reserve but will also strengthen collaboration with the RSPB as they progress wider landscape recovery initiatives, which may benefit the Board in relation to future schemes and system improvements.

The Chairman noted that the modest cost to the Board, approximately £4,100, represents good value in light of the potential long-term benefits of enhanced partnership working with the RSPB.

(a) The following reports were considered and noted by the Board:

(i) 2026/27 Budget and Ten-Year Estimates Report

Mr V Barker enquired when the new access culverts for Gosberton Clough and Swaton will be completed. Mr S Harrison confirmed this will be as soon as possible after April. The funding has been secured.

(ii) Budget with 10 Year Estimates

(iii) 2026/27 Summary budget by month

(iv) 2026/27 Detailed budget by month

(v) 10 Year Schemes Budget

Mr V Barker enquired where he can find the Barn Owl Box Maintenance information. The Chairperson confirmed the Environment Committee papers are on the website.

(vi) 10 Year Plant replacement budget

(vii) 2026/27 Cumulative Solar Panel Report

(viii) October 2025 Electricity Analysis

2592 To receive the Quarter 3 Forecast and Period 09 Management Accounts - Agenda Item 7

(a) Quarter 03 Forecast

The Finance & Admin Director reported that grant income for the current financial year is forecast to be approximately £3.8 million below budget, due to several structural repair schemes proving undeliverable within the year. These schemes will therefore be carried forward into future years.

It was further noted that additional schemes will extend into 2026–27, as priority has been given to the completion of the current IDB Fund projects. Three schemes supported by the IDB Fund have submitted additional funding requests, and an overspend is anticipated, although responses to those requests have not yet been received.

The forecasted figures for pumping station maintenance also include the cost of the 5G telemetry upgrade, approved at the recent Executive Committee meeting. Overall, an underspend of £2,609 is currently projected for the year.

Period 09 Management Accounts

The Finance & Admin Director presented the management accounts for the period ending 31 December. £19,000 of the outstanding drainage rates is subject to agreed payment plans. Solar income is currently £1,000 above budget, although two sites are presently not communicating; these issues are being investigated. The schemes programme is showing an apparent underspend of over £5 million within the accounts; however, this is largely attributable to timing differences. Drain maintenance showed an underspend of approximately £60,000 at the end of December, though it is expected that some of this variance will reduce as the year progresses in line with the forecast.

2593 To review the Risk Register - Agenda Item 8

The CEO noted there had been no changes since the risk register was presented at the last Board meeting (9th December 2025). As there were no comments, the Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

2594 To consider reports on the following – Agenda item 9

(a) Monthly Accounts: (November 2025 – January 2026)

The monthly accounts for November 2025 to January 2026 were presented.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(b) Monthly Accounts: Woldmarsh

The Board's monthly Woldmarsh invoices, inclusive of October 2025 - December 2025, were presented.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(c) Update on Enforcement Actions Taken from November 2025)

The Chief Executive presented the update on Enforcement actions from November 2025.

The Board RESOLVED that this report be noted.

(d) Schedule of Consents from November 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.

2595 To receive the draft minutes of the Joint ADA Lincs / Welland and Nene Branch Meeting held on 23rd October 2025. - Agenda Item 10

The draft minutes of the Joint ADA Lincs / Welland and Nene Branch Meeting held on 23rd October 2025 were noted.

2596 To authorise the Chairperson and Finance Director to seal the Rate for 2026/27 – Agenda Item 11

It was RESOLVED that the Chairperson and Chief Executive be authorised to seal the Drainage Rate and Special Levies for the year 2026/27 as follows:

(a) Drainage Rates

	<u>Rate in the £</u>	<u>Estimated Amount of Drainage Rates Payable</u>
Sub-District No 1 – Being so much of the said Internal Drainage District as comprises the area of the Borough of Boston as constituted and in existence immediately before 1 st April 1974.	10.21p	<u>£1,685,690</u>
Sub-District No 2 – Being the remainder of the Internal Drainage District.	20.41p	

(b) Special Levies

Boston Borough Council	£ 1,357,420.12
South Holland District Council	£ 257,039.46
North Kesteven District Council	£ 155,912.19
South Kesteven District Council	£ 99,110.14
	<u>£ 1,780,120.02</u>

2597 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 12

There was no other business.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 14:33

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