



# Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

Station Road  
Swineshead  
Boston  
Lincolnshire  
PE20 3PW

01205 821440

[www.blacksluiceidb.gov.uk](http://www.blacksluiceidb.gov.uk)

[mailbox@blacksluiceidb.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox@blacksluiceidb.gov.uk)

Our Ref: DW/JL/B10

Your Ref:

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## **To all Members of the Environment Committee and Invited Guests**

Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Environment Committee will be held at the offices of the Board on Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 at 2:00pm at which your attendance is requested.

The Board are conscious of reducing the amount of printing where possible, therefore some items on the agenda will only be found on the Board's website at the following link:

<https://www.blacksluiceidb.gov.uk/resources/document-library/meetings/>

Daniel Withnall  
Chief Executive

## AGENDA

1. Record the meeting
2. To welcome guests and receive apologies for absence
3. Declarations of interest.
4. To receive and, if correct, sign the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025. **(page 1-14)**
5. Matters arising.
6. Update on BAP action progress 2025/26. **(pages 15 - 25)**
7. Review the new BAP 2026 – 2031. **(Separate Booklet)**
8. To receive a report on environmental work completed in 2025/26 and recommendations for proposed work for 2026/27. **(pages 26 - 43)**
9. To receive the 2025 barn owl report. **(pages 44 - 45)**
10. To receive the 2025 butterfly report from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation. **(pages 46 - 48)**
11. To receive a report on the mink progress for 2025/26 **(pages 49 - 50)**
12. To receive a presentation from Mark Tartellin on the Bourne Fen Wetland Project. **(verbal) 20 minutes**
13. To review changes working to the badger policy. Policy No 55 **(pages 51 - 53)**
14. Any other business.

# BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held at the offices of the Board on  
4<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 2pm

### Members

Chairperson - \* Mr R Needham

* Mr W Ash	* Mr G Atkinson
* Mr P Holmes	* Cllr A Hagues
* Mr M Rollinson	* Mr P Robinson
* Mr R Welberry	* Mr M Taylor
* Cllr C Rylott	

\* Member Present

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Chief Executive)  
Mr P Nicholson (Projects Director)  
Mr S Harrison (Maintenance Director)  
Miss E Askew (Environment Officer)  
Ms T Smalley (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)  
Mr A Davies (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership)  
Mr J Emerson (Member of the Public)

#### 2436 Recording the meeting - Agenda Item 1

Board Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

#### 2437 Apologies for absence and welcome guests - Agenda Item 2

There were no apologies for absence.

The Chairperson welcomed and introduced guests; Ms T Smalley (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) and Mr A Davies (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership).

#### 2438 Declarations of interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2439 Review the Environment Committee Terms of Reference - Agenda Item 4

All AGREED to recommend the Environment Committee's Terms of Reference to the Board for approval, with the below amendment:

- Paragraph 2 – Remove '*No one other than the*'... Committee Members, members of the public and Board Officers shall be entitled...

2440 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 5

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2441 Matters arising - Agenda Item 6

There were no matters arising.

2442 To review the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (Policy No. 11) - Agenda Item 7

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) be approved at the next Board meeting.

(a) BAP Action Progress Update

The Chief Executive noted that this is a new format of reporting on the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). It is written within the BAP that the actions within it will be reported on, which has not always happened comprehensively previously, and so this format of reporting pulls out the actions within the BAP and provides updates on them.

The Environment Officer presented this report, highlighting key points as follows:

5.2.1 Hedgerows – The Environment Officer informed the committee that the action of planting 0.5km of hedgerow has not yet been completed or even started. The cost of this to the Board would be high and the Board have not destroyed or caused loss of hedgerow from their works so there is no mitigation required. Therefore, more feasible alternative options will be looked at for inclusion in the next BAP. The difficulty of trying to find locations for hedgerow was noted due to the Board not owning land and not being able to plant alongside watercourses for maintenance access.

Ms T Smalley reminded the committee that the Board are not just required to mitigate for its activities, the Board has a statutory duty to enhance biodiversity as outlined in the Environment Act (2021) Section 102 - *duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity*.

The Chairperson questioned who suggested the 0.5km in the first instance? It was noted that it was written into the BAP when it was produced in 2021.

5.2.2 Reedbeds and Drainage Ditches - Reference was made to the aim of unmown toe of banks where risk and ditch profile allows. The Environment Officer noted that she is going to re-evaluate if the Board are doing this at all or doing it enough. The Environment Officer explained that the toe of the watercourse is the main habitat of water voles and so by leaving it unmown it is therefore not disturbing their home but it is also protecting the Board as it is unlawful to destroy a water voles' habitat.

The Chief Executive added that the workforce need to be informed of which drains to do this on, rather than leave it to their discretion.

It was acknowledged that the watercourse would need to be large enough so that leaving it unmown would not impede on the flow of water.

The Environment Officer confirmed that all the water voles would require would be from 10cm-30cm of vegetation and doesn't always need to be at the bottom of the bank towards the water necessarily.

5.3.2 Bats - Bat boxes are installed at every pumping station, however, due to the age and condition of these pumping stations this is now being re-considered due to the stations being need of repair works or replacement, which would prove more difficult if bats were nesting in them. There is no evidence of bats at any of them, therefore, the four pumping stations which have imminent works coming up, the bat boxes have been removed.

The Environment Officer therefore suggested that she will be looking at any alternative options for supporting bats, other than boxes on the pumping stations.

Mr P Holmes noted how difficult it is to get bats to use a box. Ms T Smalley noted that they are more successful if a call recording is used to attract them.

The Chief Executive referenced the four pumping stations earmarked for works already and a further seven stations for which are hoping to achieve grant funding imminently, which would make work more challenging if bats were present.

The Environment Officer noted that there has been bat activity around some of the pumping stations, but boxes not used. It being noted that one of them is Damford which is adjacent to a woodland. Bats nest in trees and so some of the Board's bat boxes could potentially be put on trees rather than pumping stations. Ms T Smalley noted that the Board could also diversify the plant life around the box which will attract pollinators and provide a food source for the bats.

5.3.6 Eel – The Environment Officer noted that the Board will need to start looking more closely at eel passage at pumping stations in the near future. Explaining that eleven of the Board's pumping stations eel pass exemptions expired in November 2024. Only five of these exemptions have been extended so far, the remainder are expected to be received shortly. The exemptions being received are coming back with new conditions to create a plan within twelve months and to have actioned that plan with dates varying from 2028 - 2038. The Board will therefore be working with the local EA Fisheries Officer to produce the mitigation plans as required.

Mr R Welberry questioned how it is known what eels there are? The Environment Officer noted that it is not currently, sightings are very rare, but DNA water sampling could be carried out to identify the presence of them. Ms T Smalley noted that the Fens East team have been doing eel DNA sampling so would be worth contacting them.

The Chairperson questioned if the new pumps being installed will be eel friendly? The Chief Executive confirmed that the work being done is not actually new pumps, just replacement of the motor. They can only be eel friendly if it is a full pump replacement as opposed to refurbishment.

5.3.9 Butterfly and Moth - The committee were informed that since the commencement of the alternate bank cutting, the butterfly site at Amber Hill no longer gets cut annually, as it has done previously. Those responsible for the butterfly site have requested that it be done annually. Some committee members were surprised that they wanted it cut, but it was felt it would probably be to help generate more growth.

This section is hand cut and would take around three hours. The committee were of the opinion that for the little cost and helping to enhance the butterfly population, to cut this annually.

(b) Moving forward with a BAP from 2026+

The committee were informed that the current BAP expires in 2026. The Environment Officer noted that there is a move towards Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), as opposed to BAP's. Lincolnshire County Council is the responsible body for the LNRS for Lincolnshire which is due to be published March 2026 (GLNP are leading on this for LCC).

The Chief Executive felt that the formation of a new BAP needs to be something that is produced from a working group, perhaps with bimonthly meetings, to build the new document. The Chief Executive added that ideally it would have tied in with the Lincolnshire LNRS, but if it is not due for publication until March 2026, this will be too late for any major influence on the Board's document.

Mr P Holmes questioned if it is necessary for committee members to have a paper copy of the BAP (in the interests of reducing printing). The Chief Executive felt that the committee would benefit from a paper copy for the initial review and then following that to review the actions within it rather than the document as a whole.

Ms T Smalley noted that Witham 4<sup>th</sup> IDB have just produced their new document which might be of use.

2443 To receive a report on environmental work completed in 2024/25 and recommendations for proposed works for 2025/26 - Agenda Item 8

The Environment Officer and Maintenance Director presented this agenda item, highlighting particular points as follows.

**Completed Works 2024/25**

Owl Boxes

2024 was a better year for Barn Owls than 2023, box occupancy was higher, however, brood size was still quite low (thought to be due to lack of food supply - water voles - as a result of the wet weather). There were 23 barn owls hatched and fledged this year and eight kestrel chicks.

Jackdaw numbers were also reduced, their occupancy was identified in fourteen out of twenty-five used boxes (56%), compared to 86% the previous year.

The Environment Officer noted that all replacement boxes are the new 'zig zag' style (Board currently has four) which are designed to allow owl entrance but prevent Jackdaw entrance. However, Alan Ball has advised that he has witnessed that the Jackdaws are already adapting to these new boxes and simply making two nests rather than one. However, it was noted that owls will claim a box and kick Jackdaws out if they want to use it as a nest.

Mr M Rollinson made reference to the lack of water voles, questioning if that, due to the better control of mink, this is helping increase water vole numbers. The Environment Officer confirmed this link and that it should then also help barn owls in the longer term. It was confirmed that the Environment Officer has seen water vole activity in the Board area.

#### Early Flailing Works

Early season bank flailing on our high-profile watercourses (approximately 67km) was completed along with the early season full cuts on the main river highland carriers (which has now replaced the health & safety cuts) for the Environment Agency (EA) through our Public Sector Co-Operation Agreement (PSCA). Our pumping station grounds maintenance cuts commence in March each year until the end of the growing season.

#### Control of Mink

There are now twenty-one mink rafts out in the Board's area, which are proving to be a success, with 84 mink caught in the last year.

Lincolnshire is still the area with the highest population of mink, but it now showing signs of reduction. Norfolk and Suffolk have now completely eradicated them. Ms T Smalley confirmed that the whole of Greater Lincolnshire is now covered, with the possibility of more funding being achieved.

The Chairperson questioned if 21 is enough for the size of the Board's area, it was confirmed that studies have been conducted which show it is enough, but if more funding was achieved, more rafts would be deployed.

#### RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh

It was noted that there has been a request to extend the season into November. The Board view being that removing water is fine, as long as it is not discharged back into the system during times of high levels.

#### Operation Fly Swat

The Maintenance Director explained that the Board's Officer's are considering whether this service is still offering value for money. This year's contribution to Boston Borough Council was £4,000. However, the Board seem to be removing more fly tipping than the council. The council refuse to collect any fly tip if it is in a watercourse, even if it a small watercourse that would be easily accessible on foot to remove. If the Board recover the fly tip and then bring back to the depot for collection by the council, the council have certain criteria for collection such as not touching it if it has been in a watercourse or wanting the Board to load it with a machine. The Maintenance Director has suggested that the council's operatives have further training to enable them to remove more fly tips. The Board are therefore having the cost of removing it in a lot of circumstances, so therefore question if it is worth being part of the partnership.

It was confirmed that the operation fly swat partnership is made up of Boston Borough Council, Environment Agency, Welland & Deepings IDB, Witham 4<sup>th</sup> IDB, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Platform Housing and Longhurst Group. The Maintenance Director noted that contributions from the housing groups are less than what the Board contributes and yet a lot of the fly tip seems to be near their housing developments.

Photo examples were displayed on screen.

It was also noted that unless a fly tip is impacting on the conveyance of water in a watercourse, the Board has no responsibility to remove it. Going forward, it may be an option to remove it and leave on the side of the road or remove it and recover to the yard and have a skip in the yard for fly tipping, rather than contributing to the partnership.

The Chief Executive noted that the Board has spent an additional £4,000 in removal of fly tip costs in labour and plant, and of the opinion that it is no longer offering value for money, suggesting that the Board give notice that we won't be renewing from 01 April 2026.

Mr P Holmes noted that he believes the Board's contribution will be a substantial proportion of the contributions and will force the council to re-evaluate.

Mr P Robinson noted this concern that, as farmers, he was informed that if they removed a fly tip and left it on the side of the road, the farmer would be liable if somebody was to hit it.

It was also noted it could roll back into the watercourse if left on the side.

Cllr C Rylott noted that she has called the flyswat team out before and had a positive experience with them. But added that it shouldn't be a cost to the Board to dispose of it, suggesting that if we remove it because it is blocking a watercourse, to leave it on the side for collection by the council. Further suggesting that it be brought up at a Board meeting where there a lots of Boston Borough Councillor's present.

The Chief Executive noted that he is attending a separate meeting with the other IDB's this week, so will discuss with them their opinions, then suggesting it be raised with one of the appointed Board Members to try and progress the matter.

#### Wildflower Meadow

The Board own an area of land adjacent to Cooks Lock Pumping Station it is currently not managed but is listed to be managed as a wildflower meadow. The Environment Officer has now purchased the required seed, which is due to be sown this spring. It was noted how difficult it is to establish a wildflower meadow, with Ms T Smalley adding that it should be sown in October. The Environment Officer noted that she has been working on the guidance provided by the seed company, Boston Seeds. Ms T Smalley further noted the importance of cutting and removing at the end of July, noting that Lincoln Conservation Group complete this work for the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

### Badger Setts

All of the workforce's Natural England licenses for working near badgers have been returned and approved.

There was one issue experienced this year where a member of the public reported to the Rural Crime Police that the Board had interfered with a badger sett during works. They came to site to investigate and reported it back to Natural England who issued a warning on the operative's licence. The Maintenance Director believed there had been no wrongdoing and tried to explain this to Natural England, but they were not willing to review photographs / statements etc.

Ms T Smalley noted that the lack of capacity for Natural England to engage may worsen as they are currently reducing staff and have a recruitment ban.

### Pollution

There have been no pollution incidents.

### South Lincs Pollinator Project

It was noted that the Board has identified a suitable site for this (Kirton Marsh drain) but it has not yet been progressed due to change of staffing at the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust who are supporting this project. Ms T Smalley noted that Hannah Curtis has taken the lead on this project and will put her in contact with the Environment Officer.

### Artificial King Fisher Nests

Artificial King Fisher nests have been installed into the recent bank reprofiling at Rippingale. The nests are made from ICB containers and pipe, filled with sand and gravel, for them to burrow out their own nest within. There has been activity in the area already and will continue monitoring over the next year.

The Projects Director noted the only concern that the Board may damage the pipe sticking out of the bank, whilst doing routine maintenance with machinery. The Maintenance Director confirmed that the pipe has been left out of the bank quite prominently so that they are easily visible to the Board's machine operators. It was noted that they can also be GPS marked and a marker post should also be installed.

### Proposed works 2025/2026

#### Biodiversity Surveys

The services of Tim Smith will no longer be required now the Environment Officer is in post. The Environment Officer explained that she will continue with the biodiversity surveys, with a particular focus on water voles and otters due to a lack of data on them currently. The Environment Officer noted she has already started on some of these surveys, displaying on screen camera footage of otter at Damford Pumping Station. The workforce have been educated on identifying signs of otter activity and has been added to their GPS systems for reporting.

Mr P Robinson noted that they have got otter surveys being carried out on land earmarked for infrastructure, suggesting that perhaps the data can be shared. Ms T Smalley noted that their data will be commercially sensitive until the environmental impact assessment and ecology report is published.

### Winter Bushing and Cleansing

Bushing and cleansing works will commence in November 2025, this hasn't been completed in the past year due to the focus being on the completion of the IDB Recovery Fund works.

### Summer cutting and vegetation clearance

An alternate maintenance programme continues to be followed, the Site Engineer has reviewed the watercourses to identify all alternate possibilities. The flail will commence early season cutting (main pump drains) from the beginning of April on a four-week cycle, prior to which, bird surveys will be completed.

### Grass Snake Nesting Sites

The budget for this has been increased due to plans to create and install two new artificial nests.

### Environmental Training

Now the Board has employed an Environment Officer, training will be led by her.

### Environment Budget 2025/26

The committee AGREED the budget as below:

Environmental and GIS Officer	£	25,879
Operation Fly swat partner	£	4,000
Fly Swat Labour & Plant	£	4,000
Fish Relocation for Winter Cleansing	£	2,000
Barn Owl Box Replacements	£	2,100
Tom Tom Repairs/Updates	£	1,700
Mink Control	£	1,600
Hedgerow Planting (BAP)	£	1,400
Grass Snake Sites	£	800
Wild Meadow Maintenance	£	700
Bat Survey Equipment	£	675
Pollinator Project	£	875
Slip Repairs Pollinator Seed	£	600
Training Courses	£	500
Biosecurity Decontamination Kits	£	400
Wildlife Camera Traps	£	400
WNNMP	£	400
GLNP	£	520
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	£	300

**£ 48,849**

#### 2444 To receive a report on Barn Owl Nesting Boxes for 2024 - Agenda Item 9

The Environment Officer presented the Barn Owl Report for 2024.

2445 To receive a report on the 2024 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation and Wildlife area, Amber Hill - Agenda Item 10

The 2024 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly conservation and wildlife area at Amber Hill were presented, the impacts of the bad weather being noted.

2446 To review the following policies:

(a) Policy No. 53: Biosecurity

The Environment Officer explained this is a new policy that the Board is required to have. It outlines how the Board will contribute to stopping the spread of Invasive Non-native Species (INNS). The workforce will require some more training on the identification of these species.

Mr R Welberry questioned if there are any American Crayfish in the Board's area? The Environment Officer confirmed that have been no sightings reported.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Biosecurity Policy (Policy No. 53) be approved at the next Board meeting.

(b) New Policy: Conservation

The Environment Officer explained that this policy is formed from the conservation statement that was displayed on the website. No changes have been made to what was displayed on the website.

Mr P Holmes noted the reference to 'English Nature' in paragraph 11, which is now Natural England. It was noted that once the new BAP is produced, this policy will be reviewed and updated in line with it.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Conservation Policy (Policy No. 54) be approved at the next Board meeting.

(c) New Policy: Working near badgers

The Environment Officer explained that this policy was requested by the Audit & Risk Committee, which outlines how the Board should operate around badgers and the reporting process etc.

Mr R Welberry noted the decline in hedgehogs, wild ducks, wild pheasants etc., questioning if there is any correlation between the badgers and this decline? Ms T Smalley noted that it is a possibility but there is no scientific evidence, adding that ploughing habitat will play a role in this (habitat fragmentation). Ms T Smalley noted that Mr A Davies will be able to investigate further whether there are any scientific studies on it.

Mr M Rollinson noted that another IDB had asked the Environment Agency (EA) how much they spend on relocating badger a year, to which the EA responded that they don't record that expenditure. It was noted that because the EA have to go through the Public Body tender framework it costs a lot more to do works than others not using the framework. The Chief Executive acknowledged this, noting that the Treasury rules cause the issue, noting that the Board put some works out for tender through the framework and were quoted £600,000 and have since been quoted less than £100,000 for the same works outside of the framework.

Reference was also made to Tumbly Quarry, where the EA were quoted £5million for the works through the framework, the works have now been completed by others for £500,000.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Working Near Badgers (Policy No. 55) be approved at the next Board meeting.

(d) New Policy: Working near Water Voles

The Environment Officer explained that this policy was requested by the Audit & Risk Committee, which outlines how the Board should operate around water voles.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Working near Water Voles (Policy No. 56) be approved at the next Board meeting.

2447 To receive a report from Tammy Smalley (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) - Agenda Item 12

Black Poplars project – Ms T Smalley noted a seed collection and propagation project with Black Poplars, questioning if anybody has any, nobody did.

Fens East Peat Partnership:

- *Baston Fen* - The peatland restoration works at Baston Fen are now complete.
- *Bourne North Fen* - This is still going through the planning permission process because of which the opportunity for works this winter has been missed and so have been pushed to September 2025 – March 2026. However, if this timescale is not met, then the funding will be lost. (The Board are partners in this work as the Board own the pond on the site and will be completing the works on behalf of the Wildlife Trust).
- *Mapping of submerged peats* – With the University of Lincoln. Ms T Smalley noted that at Bourne Fen, it is oxidising in the top 30cm. Aim is to try and establish how much Highways and carbon would be saved with less submerged peat oxidising. By getting more water into them, by keeping the drain level higher, this will stop the oxidisation. It was also noted that no till cover cropping would possibly help with surface peats.

National Strategic Infrastructure Projects:

- *South Lincolnshire Reservoir* – currently going through the Development Consent Order (DCO).
- *National Grid* – pylon and cable routes.
- *Geological disposal facility*
- *Carbon capture*
- *Hydrogen*
- *Desalination plants*
- *Solar farms*

Ms T Smalley outlined to the committee that Lincolnshire is changing at a more rapid pace than ever seen in her career before (on and offshore), highlighting that there can be major benefits if done correctly, but could also be major consequences if not done correctly. The Wildlife Trust therefore work strategically with the developers so that it benefits nature and the local people.

Reference was made to solar farms, with the Chief Executive noting that the Board are being very stringent on the 9 metre byelaw and crossing points on drains etc. and the general response is that they are willing to comply.

Mr R Welberry questioned if hedgerows are planted around solar farms? Ms T Smalley noted it is dependent on the landscape, but some do, and they also take advice on the best suited seed mix for underneath and around. There is also a strategic approach to ground nesting birds, whereby developers contribute to one 'pot of money' which will be used to purchase land / work with a landowner to do some large-scale mitigation for ground nesting birds. A grant is also trying to be secured around intercropping with solar farms to have food production within them.

The Chief Executive noted that usually solar farms retain their agricultural land status and therefore continue to pay Board drainage rates as opposed to council business rates. However, there is one recently that has removed its agricultural status and therefore pays business rates which are a lot more than drainage rates.

Green Investment in Greater Lincolnshire – This will be going live in the new financial year. This will bring together buyers of biodiversity, water and carbon credits with sellers. The following example was given; an agreement has just been made between a developer and landowner for a low integrity habitat short grassland in medium condition for £27,000 per unit (3-4 units per ha) for a thirty-year period.

2448 To receive a report from Aiden Davies (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership) - Agenda Item 13

Mr A Davies gave an update on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as follows, starting by giving a brief introduction of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) and its policy and strategy priorities, followed by an introduction to BNG as follows:

- Introduced in the Environment Act 2021
- Requires most major development to provide a 10% uplift in biodiversity
- Onsite, offsite units or statutory credits
- Is calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric
- Uses habitat as a proxy for biodiversity
- Should be secured and managed for 30 years
- Applies to terrestrial habitat in England up to and including intertidal habitats
- Most Town and Country Planning Act development
  - Small sites (under 1ha) also require BNG
  - Late 2025 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
- Does not override the mitigation hierarchy

How BNG is measured and calculated:

- Statutory metric
- What type of habitat – a proxy for biodiversity
- Area or length of habitat (not interchangeable)
- Distinctiveness (Very low to very high)
- Condition (Poor to good)
- Strategic significance (Low, medium, high, based of the LNRS)
- Time to condition – enhancement and creation only
- Spatial risk – enhancement and creation only
- Difficulty – enhancement and creation only

Commercial developments where floorspace is under 1000m<sup>2</sup> or total site area is less than 1ha, are also required to achieve BNG. They will be required to use the Small Sites Metric to calculate biodiversity units.

#### Statutory Credits:

- National landscape scale Nature Based Solution
- Priced to encourage onsite and offsite BNG units
- Metric weighted to require 2 credits for every one unit
- Could result in a local biodiversity gain

#### Must follow BNG Hierarchy:

1. Avoid adverse effects to onsite habitat with a habitat distinctiveness score of 6 or more (High or Very High)
2. If the effects can't be avoided mitigate against them
3. If they can't be mitigated against then enhance onsite habitat
4. If onsite habitat can't be enhanced create onsite habitat
5. If onsite creation isn't possible then offsite biodiversity units should be secured
6. Where offsite biodiversity net gain isn't possible then statutory credits should be purchased as a last resort

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will dictate strategic significance for biodiversity net gains

- offering the opportunity for a 1.15 uplift in the unit value of habitats created
- But also increasing the cost of destroying existing strategic habitats  
In turn biodiversity net gain sites will contribute to achieving the measures mapped out by the LNRS.

#### Considerations to make:

- Do we have landholdings suitable for offsetting area-based biodiversity units? (*This would involve the creation or enhancement of habitats*)
- Can we undertake creation or enhancement of watercourses and their riparian zones?
  - *Examples of creation include – installation of new ditch or canal where this doesn't impact baseline value.*
  - *Examples of enhancement include - removing culverts, restoring natural alignment, enhancing the riparian zone and removal of encroaching features (anything that impacts the natural process of riparian zone).*
  - *Note that established footpaths, towpaths and river crossings are exempt from being considered encroachment.*
  - *Riparian zones = 10m from top of bank for priority rivers, other rivers and streams and canals. 5m for Ditches. Not applicable for culverts*
- Can you plant new or enhance any hedgerow on your landholdings?

#### Habitat Banking: Generating BNG Units for sale to developers

- Metric and what work you will undertake
- Section 106 or Conservation Covenant
- Statutory biodiversity gain register and local markets
- Conservation covenants require land registry too
- Sale directly with buyer or through a market or habitat bank broker
- Statutory register again
- 30 years

Bespoke habitat creation: creating certain habitats for bespoke compensation of development

- Metric and what work you will undertake
- Through discussion with developers
- Section 106 or Conservation Covenant
- Statutory BNG register (Land Registry?)
- 30 years

There are other opportunities to leverage funding through management of land:

- Voluntary biodiversity credits – potentially stackable, but unstandardised, likely to require large areas of land
- Voluntary carbon credits – lack of standardization, payments considered to be too low by many
- Water credits – relatively new, water quality and flood risk markets
- Countryside stewardship – targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats
- Landscape recovery – bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment

IDBs may find themselves having to offset their own impacts.

Development which requires permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless:

- Subject to Section 90 of the Act - Development with Government Authorisation
- Granted through a Local Development Order
- Permission sought prior to 12th February 2024

Exemptions also apply where:

- Less than 25m<sup>2</sup> of non-priority habitat is impacted
- Less than 5m of linear non-priority habitat impacted
- Developments undertaken for the purpose of fulfilling the BNG planning condition for another development

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects granted under Planning Act 2008 will be required to provide net gains for biodiversity from late 2025.

Pre application

- Site selection and design- follow mitigation hierarchy, use biodiversity metric to support this
- Calculation of BNG units- calculate before and after development, if BNG cannot be achieved then off site should be used

Predevelopment

- BNG Plan (though preferred pre application)- includes info such as species factors, habitat management plans, and how BNG will be managed and maintained
- Secure BNG (Section 106 on conservation covenant)- off site BNG will need to be secured for a minimum of 30 years
- Register any offsite BNG with the Biodiversity Gain Site Register

#### Commencement of development

- Manage, monitor and report- any land delivering BNG will need to be managed, monitored and reported on for the duration of the net gain agreement

BNG shouldn't overshadow the biodiversity duty in Section 40 of NERC Act 2006, strengthened by amendments laid out in the Environment Act 2021

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

Having regard for:

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies – Responsible Authority
- Species Conservation Strategies – Natural England
- Protected Site Strategies – Natural England

Ms T Smalley noted that there is demand from developers to buy BNG.

Ms T Smalley confirmed that 0.5km of native hedgerow with standard trees which would provide 3-4 hedgerow units which could be valued at £20,000 - £30,000 per unit. Mr W Ash questioned if existing hedgerow would contribute? Mr A Davies responded that only if it was being enhanced in some way. It was also confirmed that there is a minimum length of 25 metres.

Mr M Rollinson questioned, in light of the government's target to build so many houses, whether BNG may get pushed aside if it is delaying the planning permission process? Ms T Smalley noted that it would have to be completely overturned. Ms T Smalley added that the general consensus is that developers are accepting it and factoring it in, the issue being the lack of supply chain and lack of trained Ecologists for verification and enforcement.

#### 2449 To receive a report on the Board's CO2 Emissions - Agenda Item 14

The Environment Officer presented a report on the Board's CO2 Emissions (from vehicle movements only), 13,206.4kg for the calendar year 2024, for information purposes.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:07.

**BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**  
**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 03 MARCH 2026**

**AGENDA ITEM 06**

**PROGRESS UPDATE - BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES**

**Section 5.2 Habitat Action Plans**

**5.2.1 Hedgerows**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Ensure that compensation planting takes place if any hedges are removed. To provide enhancement by being a wider species mix.	Length in m of hedges removed and hedges planted	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowners
2	Prevent damage to existing hedges (does not preclude management to allow watercourse maintenance, including coppicing).	Intact hedgerow in m this year compared to last	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
3	Identify location and plant 0.5 km hedgerow over 5 years.	Length of new hedgerow (m) each year	April 2025	Ecologist	Landowner
4	Avoid trimming hedgerows between 1 March and 31 July (the main nesting season for birds)	Annual reports	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner

**Work completed 2021-2024**

3 - Feasibility and cost of planting 0.5km hedgerow is high and not in the budget for 2025/26. The board has not destroyed any hedgerows in the last 5 years so we can re-evaluate this action within the BAP. We can look into a smaller scale option or planting some hedgerows at select pumping stations. It is proposed to include a new action for hedgerows in the new, 2026 BAP. Compensation hedgerow planting took place at Rippingale after a large bank reprofile.

**2025-26 update**

Nothing further to report.

**5.2.2 Reedbeds and Drainage Ditches**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain the existing marginal fringes of vegetation of at least 45 - 60cm wide (approx.)* along at least one side of all drainage ditches where flood risk allows. *Width of vegetation fringe is dependent upon flood risk category and drainage ditch width. Where a wider channel allows a wider fringe then establish, where flood risk prevents, act accordingly. Use drainage channel biodiversity manual as a guide.	Length of marginal fringe extent in m maintained each year where flood risk allows.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Identify ditches suitable to allow a continuous marginal fringe of vegetation at least 45 - 60cm wide (approx.) or more along at least one side of the ditch.* In areas identified, plant with suitable plugs, install coir rolls or allow colonisation naturally.	Establishment/colonisation of new marginal vegetation in m each year	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
3	Identify ditches which are too narrow for a continuous vegetation fringe to be installed, but where occasional patches of vegetation fringes can be encouraged. Plant with suitable plugs, install coir rolls or allow colonization naturally.	Length of occasional marginal vegetation patches established in m	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
4	Install marginal plant ledges during bank re-profiling and plant with sedge plugs or coir rolls	Length in m of plant ledge created each year	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist
5	Alternate bank side cutting each year where risk allows. Mowing to take place between August and April to avoid bird nesting season. 45 - 60cm or more from toe of bank to be left unmown on ditches where risk and ditch profile allows.	Increased extent of uncut ditch bank	Ongoing	Ops lead	Ecologist
6	Remove bank-side cuttings where possible (with conveyor) to encourage sward diversity. Survey to identify diversity baseline and diversity following cuttings removal.	Survey highlights increased sward diversity after 5 years.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a
7	Establish a pollen-rich sward following bank re-profiling	Floristic species present in bank sward.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist

Work completed 2021-2024

5 - We continue to alternate bank side cutting, and avoid the main bird nesting season by cutting August-April. We need to assess how often we are leaving toe of the bank uncut, and re-iterate to the workforce to do this.

2025-26 update.

During annual cutting brief training, workforce received refreshers on operating when cutting to leave habitat for water voles by leaving the marginal fringes of vegetation where possible, and on an annual basis. The board also continues with alternate bank cutting and avoiding the bird nesting season excluding early cuts.

5.2.3 Wet Woodland

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Identify and map the extent and condition of wet woodland within the catchment.	Number of areas and area size. GIS layer	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Ensure the maintenance programmes cause no harm to existing wet woodland.	No net loss	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
3	Monitor wet woodland and manage it effectively to prevent the area drying out.	No net loss	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
4	Consider options to help landowners maintain/restore wet woodland.	Number of areas and area size. GIS layer	On going	Ops Lead	LWT

Work completed 2021-2024

No actions regarding Wet Woodland have been taken.

**2025-26 update.**

1 – Environment officer has mapped Wet Woodland in the IDB district. There is only 1 site of WW, which is in Kirton. The habitat is in an area that is not maintained by the board, and requires no intervention.

**Section 5.3 Species Action Plans**

**5.3.1 Bank and Reed Nesting Birds**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Investigate methods for monitoring and recording various species throughout the catchments.	Records, GIS layers	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologist

Work completed 2021-2024

Environment officer has begun building a database of birds in the catchment. Data is recorded on the Birda app whenever on site or conducting a survey. Data is then transferred into an excel spreadsheet and will eventually be mapped. It will take a few years to build a comprehensive database.

**2025-26 update.**

Moving forward the focus will be on recording priority species that are listed within the BAP, through the form of GIS layers.

**5.3.2 Bats**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Investigate methods for monitoring/survey works at select pumping station sites.	Surveys, annual report	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Erect roosting boxes on Board buildings.	GIS Layer, annual report	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists

3	Locate and protect roosts used by bats.	Surveys	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists
4	Monitor and survey bat species, numbers, and locations.	Surveys	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists

Work completed 2021-2024

- Budget has been approved for 2025/26 to purchase bat survey equipment, which will be used by the Environment Officer to identify bat activity at the boards pumping stations.
- Bat boxes have previously been erected onto most pumping stations, but it has been requested that we re-evaluate this over concern for potential disruptions to future works, as bat mitigation can be very difficult.
- Bat surveys have been conducted on two pumping stations in 2024 (Ewerby, Damford) by environment officer and Tim Smith. Data is shared with LERC.

2025-26 update.

9 bat surveys have been undertaken at pumping stations by the Environment Officer and an external consultant. Surveys were undertaken in the lower pump rooms of the stations. There was no evidence of roosting which has provided us with a valuable insight to the use of the building for bats.

5.3.3 Water Vole

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Control American mink	Number of mink caught	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a
2	Work with GLNP on mink task group to monitor county water vole and mink populations.	GLNPs annual reports indicating number and results of surveys. Extent of water vole population.	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist/ GLNP
3	Continue yearly recording by operational staff.	Number and location records collected and submitted to local biodiversity records office.	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a

--	--	--	--	--

Work completed 2021-2024

1. We continue to partner with Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) on the mink eradication project, with rafts deployed throughout the catchment. The board does not monitor many rafts internally now, with WRT and external volunteers attending to alerts.

2025-26 update.

A new WRT project officer has been assigned to the Black Sluice area, and the environment officer remains in contact with him regarding any issues and developments.

5.3.4 Kingfisher

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain and avoid disturbance to potential nest sites by retaining earth cliffs and avoiding close working.	Number and extent of earth cliffs in m each year. Work schedules detail exclusion zone around known nest sites in the breeding season.	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
2	During replacement of pumping station create artificial kingfisher hole	New Kingfisher nesting hole to be present, GIS layer	On going	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

A new nest site has been created in Rippingale in January 2025. With support from the landowner, who provided some materials, 3 artificial kingfisher nests were installed into a bank reprofile.

**2025-26 update.**

No new updates, a budget for kingfisher habitat improvements is set for 2026-27. Installing artificial nests into a bank reprofile was an easy way to support kingfishers. This method can be carried over and used in the new 2026 BAP, and we can budget for some more installs.

**5.3.5 Barn Owl**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	To increase nesting opportunities on land managed by the Board.	GIS Layer	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust
2	Maintain and renew nesting boxes at Pumping stations and pole sights.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust
3	Monitor the use of the boxes, ring and record fledglings.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust
4	Maintain areas of marginal vegetation around pumping stations and drains	GIS Layer	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a

**Work completed 2021-2024**

1. Three new nest boxes have been installed (Ewerby, Damford, South Kyme) as mitigation whilst the original boxes close for 2025. Once works are complete, the original boxes will re-open, and the three new boxes will remain.
2. We receive recommendations for box replacements each year from Alan Ball (our owl partner). Per recommendations, in February 2025 we replaced an old, damaged box and pole on Holland Fen, and replaced a box at Maryland.
3. Alan Ball records all data for the board and conducts 2 checks per season at all nests.

**2025-26 update.**

Environment officer has created a GIS layer of all nest boxes and known locations of nesting owls and continues to manage nest box maintenance, including cleaning and organising any replacements.

The Environment Officer partners with Alan Ball, conducting box checks twice annually, but in 2025 only one visit was undertaken due to staffing challenges with Alan who was stretched thinly. Annual reports will continue to be shared with the Environment Officer.

**5.3.6 Eel**

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain the current range of eels within the Board's area through effective watercourse management.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Install and maintain suitably approved Eel passes where necessary.	GIS layer	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist/ EA

**Works completed in 2021-24**

No actions completed as the board has all required exemptions.

**2025-26 update.**

CEO has led liaisons with EA Area Fisheries Officer throughout 2025 in order to determine requisite eel measures be granted new exemptions for Category A pumping stations.

### 5.3.7 Otter

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain habitat suitable for otter within the Board's area	Annual maintenance works	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
2	Record sighting by the Board's workforce	GIS layer	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a
3	Construct an Otter holt and maintain	Annual maintenance/inspection	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

2. The workforce have never previously recorded otter sightings. Environment officer has recently added Otter to Tom-Tom vehicle trackers and provided them with educational materials on what field signs to look for, with a hope to begin building a GIS layer in 2025/26. Environment officer has begun collecting data on otter locations from surveys.

2025-26 update.

We continue to look for and record sightings of otters, but as a very illusive species, records remain low. Efforts have begun to try and locate an artificial otter holt that was previously created.

### 5.3.8 Grass Snake

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Create egg laying/hibernation stations throughout the Board's area.	GIS layer, annual maintenance	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

1. Nest site at Kirton Marsh was discovered to have been destroyed in 2024.

2025-26 update

The artificial nest site at Kirton Marsh was modified and rebuilt. The same new design was also installed at Great Hale Pumping Station. Monitoring of new nest sites will continue to assess for signs of hibernation or egg laying.

5.3.9 Butterfly and Moth

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Co-ordinate lite touch essential maintenance with Butterfly Garden managers.	Annual reports from Butterfly Gardens.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Butterfly Garden Managers (e.g., Amber Hill Butterfly Garden)

Work completed 2021-2024

1. 2024 report has been received from Amber Hill. The bank at the butterfly garden was not cut in 2024, which was pulled up by Phil, who requested a cut in 2025. It was not cut due to alternate bank cutting, but it seems they will request for a cut on their bank every year.

2025-26 update.

Environment officer met with Phil from Amber Hill Butterfly Garden in Spring 2025 to review the boards management and explore further opportunities for supporting butterflies. Considerations from this have been implemented into the new BAP.

## Section 6 Procedural Action Plan

### 6.3 Procedural Action Plan

Target Reference	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Ensure all staff including contractors have received high-level biodiversity training within 6 months from the start date of this Plan, or as part of their induction, and refresher training provided every 3 years.	Numbers of staff trained	Ongoing	Ecologist	
2	Produce a manual of best practice within 12 months from the date of this plan.	Publication of manual on website	June 2022	Ecologist	NE/ WT
3	Develop and deliver 12 habitat and species-specific toolbox talks, to be delivered 1 per quarter per year	Delivery of 12 toolbox talks	Ongoing	Ecologist	WT
4	Respond to applications for culverts with alternatives to maintain open watercourses. Approve no new long culvert applications.	Extent of open watercourses maintained.	Ongoing	CEO	LA's
5	Identify areas for limited maintenance	Develop the idea with the works Committees	Ongoing	Ops Team	

2025-26 update.

Environmental training on biosecurity, INNS, badgers and water vole was provided to the work force with the annual cutting brief in July 25.



**BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - 03 MARCH 2026**

**AGENDA ITEM 08**

**REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS**

**Completed Works in 2025/26**

**1. Owl Boxes**

Unfortunately, 2025 did not bring good news for barn owls in the board's district, or anywhere in the southern half of the UK. The combination of a harsh and wet winter, into a very hot and dry spring / summer caused a massive decline in numbers of prey (voles and mice). These erratic weather conditions resulted in low nesting occupancy and reduced chick numbers, making it one of the worst years on record. There were a few boxes where owl pairs attempted to lay but abandoned failed eggs early on.

The board has a total of 34 active nest boxes, but only 22 boxes were assessed in the 2025 season. Illness from Bob Sheppard, who manages nests for other board's meant that Alan Ball was further stretched across a larger area, meaning there was not enough time to fully assess the Black Sluice area.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number of occupied boxes</b>	<b>% of checked boxes</b>
Barn owl	8	45%
Jackdaw	10	36%
Kestrel	1	5%
Empty	4	18%

Although it was a bad season for barn owls, box occupancy was even worse for Kestrels, with the next box at Heckington Pumping Station being the only nest that produced a successful brood of 3 chicks.

Prior to the 2025 season, 3 new nest boxes were installed on poles at Ewerby, South Kyme, and Damford Grounds. All 3 nest boxes were taken too very quickly, with barn owl sightings at all locations, and kestrels at Damford which is positive. The pair nesting at South Kyme sadly failed on 4 eggs in June but proceeded to lay a further 6 eggs in July – the outcome of this is unknown due to staffing challenges.

Necessary maintenance and repairs have been undertaken to existing boxes, including nest clearing and the replacement of boxes at...

The completed 2024 Wildlife Conservation Partnership Barn Owl Box Report is included in Agenda Item 9.



## 2. Early Flailing Works

Early season bank flailing on our high-profile watercourses (approximately 67km) was completed along with the early season full cuts on the main river highland carriers (which has now replaced the Health & Safety cuts) for the Environment Agency (EA) through our Public Sector Co-Operation Agreement (PSCA).

Our pumping station grounds maintenance cuts commence in March each year until the end of the growing season.

## 3. Control of Mink

The Board continues to partner with the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) on the mink eradication project. The aim of the partnership is to enhance water vole conservation within the Board's catchment, contributing towards the BAP.

The board no longer holds any responsibility for rafts, but the environment officer continues to stay in touch with our local project officer regarding the programme.



## 4. RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh

Permission has again been granted by the EA and the Board for the RSPB to abstract 500,000m<sup>3</sup> of water per annum from the Wyberton Marsh pump drain to assist with water management levels in the nearby Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve. Although an application to change this has been submitted. An estimated 50% of this water volume re-enters the Wyberton Marsh pump drain after 'flushing' the Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve.

The board is helping the reserve currently with extra pumping capacity to add water to their mud flats to support breeding waders in 2026.

## 5. Operation Fly Swat

The Board remains a partner within the Operation Fly Swat team and contributes towards its running costs, which in turn offers financial benefits to the Board in relation to the amount the Board previously spent on fly tipping clearance, collection and disposal. The number of reported fly tipping incidents that the Board has attended has significantly decreased. However the Board is still asked to attend reports from Flyswat that involves them entering water.



## 6. Bat Boxes and Surveys

Bat boxes continued to be assessed and removed when required. It is still not thought that any boxes are occupied, and the condition of most existing boxes is poor. In line with the new BAP, next boxes will be more carefully considered for select locations, and surveys of existing boxes will continue.

During summer 2025, bat surveys were undertaken at 9 pumping stations (Cooks Lock, Chain Bridge, Wyberton Marsh, Holland Fen, Horbling Fen, Great Hale, Donington North Ings, Gosberton, Black Hole). These surveys gave a valuable insight into the buildings and their potential value for bats and roosting. The surveys focussed on the under-chambers of the stations, and required working in confined space procedures. Post-survey, all 9 pumping stations have been categorised as 'negligible' with no obvious features present for bats.



## 7. Eel Screens

After receiving eel pass exemptions for the boards category A classification pumping stations (Chain Bridge, Black Hole, Cooks Lock, Donington Wykes, Donington North Ings, Gosberton, Great Hale, Holland Fen, South Kyme, Swineshead, and Wyberton Marsh), the board had to follow the terms of the exemptions, which were to:

- Liaise with the Area Fisheries Officer to enable application of the Eels Regulations regulatory assessment process and determine the requisite eel measure for each pumping station by 31 October 2025

And then after;

Deliver the requisite eel measure by the specific expiry date for each pumping station, and in accordance with clause 13 annex 2 of the Grant Funding Agreement for project number AT1-023.

After liaising with the Area Fisheries Officer throughout 2025, new exemptions have been granted for the appropriate pumping stations removing the requirement to place an eel screen until specified dates that align with an agreed programme of works.

The table below outlines the relevant pumping stations with their planned refurbishment costs, timeframes and when the eel pass exemption expires. The estimated costs are for pump refurbishments only. A full pump replacement to a fish and eel friendly model adds an addition 1.5 – 2 million further.

Pumping Station	Exemption Expiry	Planned Refurbishments	Estimated Costs
Black Hole Drove	31/12/2031	2030	£130,000
Chain Bridge	31/12/2029	2026/27	£95,000
Cooks Lock	31/12/2031	2031	£120,000
Donington North Ings	31/12/2028	2026/27	£95,000
Gosberton	31/12/2027	2026/27	£95,000
Great Hale	31/12/2030	2029/30	£115,000
Holland Fen	31/12/2033	2033	£130,604
South Kyme	31/12/2035	2026/27	£90,000
Swineshead	31/12/2032	Full rebuild	10m +
Wyberton Marsh	31/12/2037	2035	£160,000

## 9. Grass Snake Nesting Sites

In spring 2025, 2 new artificial hibernacula sites were designed and installed at Great Hale and Kirton Marsh PS. The designs are new and improved compared to previous instalments and are designed to create the optimum conditions for snakes to hibernate and lay eggs. Nests are made within gabion baskets for predator protection, and are compiled of compost, wood chippings, and hay to create a warm, moist atmosphere. Nests will be checked each year for evidence of eggs and will be topped up with fresh materials.



**10. Wildflower Meadow**

The established area alongside the North Forty Foot Drain north of Cooks Lock Pumping Station totalling approximately 2,000m<sup>2</sup> is being managed as a Wildflower Meadow. In spring 2025, we worked with Boston Seed to create a mix suitable for the site. We worked on the site to scrape the top layer of earth and to remove all weeds and debris, followed by rotation and seeding. These efforts failed and the seed did not take. It is thought that the birds ate most of the seed, combined with poor quality soil.

**11. Bug Hotel**

The Bug Hotels at our Swineshead office/depot have been maintained throughout the year.



## 12. Badger Setts

From a conveyancing point of view Badger setts within banks continue to be a problem, especially so in raised main riverbanks where high fluvial flows could wash through the setts resulting in bank failures and breaches. Badger setts within banks continue to pose a risk, especially in raised riverbanks where high fluvial flows could wash through the setts resulting in bank failures. Additionally, setts can cause health & safety associated risks for operators through unstable banks where the board needs access.

A current health & safety concern can be seen within a bank near Surfleet. Due to the nature of the watercourse, we are only able to operate from one side of the bank, and this side of the bank has numerous badger setts with entrances at the top of the bank. Operations have concerns about the bank being unsafe and want to amend and smooth out the top surface to make it safer. We are not permitted to do anything about this during February, March or April due to breeding, but from May onwards we can explore our options. Amending this will depend on being granted a licence for mitigation from Natural England and will have some potentially costly implications.

We continue to follow Natural England guidelines when working adjacent to Badger setts with all our site-based employees maintaining Natural England licenses to work within the proximity of Badgers. This winter, we have been operating around badger setts when desilting. Known areas of high badger activity were desilted in January in line with licencing requirements, to avoid the sensitive badger breeding season (February – April). Where we come across a badger sett when desilting, we follow guidance of depositing silt a minimum of 10m away from the sett in all directions.



### 13. Pollution Incidents

The Board have not attended any sites where potential pollution incidents could have a detrimental effect on water quality and/or the general environment in order to reduce any potential pollution/contamination issues.

We have one on-going report of smaller scale pollution discharging into a board drain on Villa Lane, Swineshead. This has been reported to the EA and the outcome will be monitored.

We involve the Environment Agency and seek recovery of costs for all resources employed on such sites.

We continue with Pollution Liability Insurance for £2m of cover per claim.

#### Chain Bridge

The board has been facing an issue dating back to 2018 with regards to litter pollution in the New Hammond Beck coming from the yard of B&M. The level of litter in the drain and within the bank side has been an environmental hazard as we have annual nesting swans on the bank. The swans have been using plastic wrap and litter from B&M to make their nests. Additionally, the litter ends up at the pumping station weed screen blocking it.

The environment officer and enforcement officer worked together to push for a solution with B&M, which successfully resulted in the installation of a new compound in the yard for deliveries, largely solving the litter issue.

**14. Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP)**

As in previous years the Board (as do all Lincolnshire IDB's) continued with our Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the GLNP and attend their annual conference. The cost of our partnership with GLNP is £273.18 + VAT

The Lincolnshire Environment Records Centre (LERC) data is included within our SLA, this enables us to check the ecological data from within and around our catchment. The complete LERC data collection holds over 15 million sightings. This is an incredibly useful feature and is important when conducting ecological surveys.

**16. Artificial House Martin Nests.**

The House Martin is part of the hirundines family (swallows, swifts, martins) and is in decline in the UK. The Board are in a unique position to help the House Martin as one of the problems is a lack of suitable nesting sites and the fact their mud-based nests tend to fall off the walls they attach them to in dry weather.

Helpringham and Quadring Fen Pumping Stations have House Martin nests installed. No evidence of usage was found during the 2025 season, but it can be quite difficult and take a few years for uptake.



**18. The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP).**

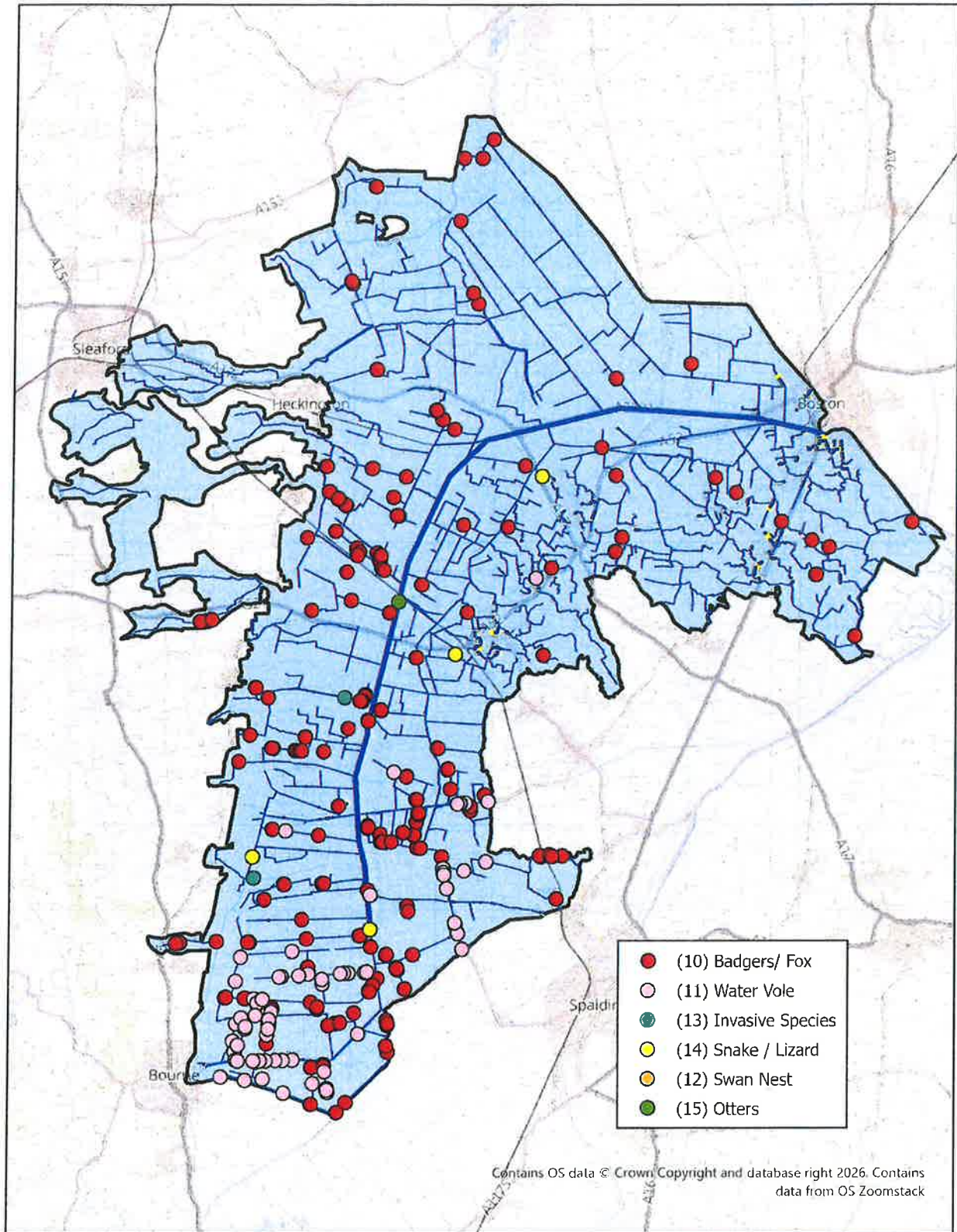
We continue to be an advisory member of the partnership focusing on marine restoration and recovery and regularly attend the full partnership and Boston Advisory Group meetings. The cost of the partnership is £400.

**19. The Environmental Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards**

This detailed guide was published by ADA in October 2022 and offers guidance and codes of practice to activities undertaken by IDB's. Our Operations Team will be integrating these best practices into our everyday workplace.

Copies are available upon request or can be found on the ADA website.

20. Environmental Tracker Reports



Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2026. Contains data from OS Zoomstack

 <p><b>Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board</b>          Station Road, Swineshead,          Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 3PW          Tel: 01205 821440          Email: mailbox@blacksluiceidb.gov.uk</p>	<b>Environmental Tracker Reports 2025/26</b>	
	<p>© Crown Copyright and database right 2026. All rights reserved.          Ordnance Survey Licence number 100021578</p>	<p><b>Date: 18/02/2026</b></p> <p><b>Scale: 1:172,194</b></p>

## **Proposed Works and Environmental Involvement in 2025/26**

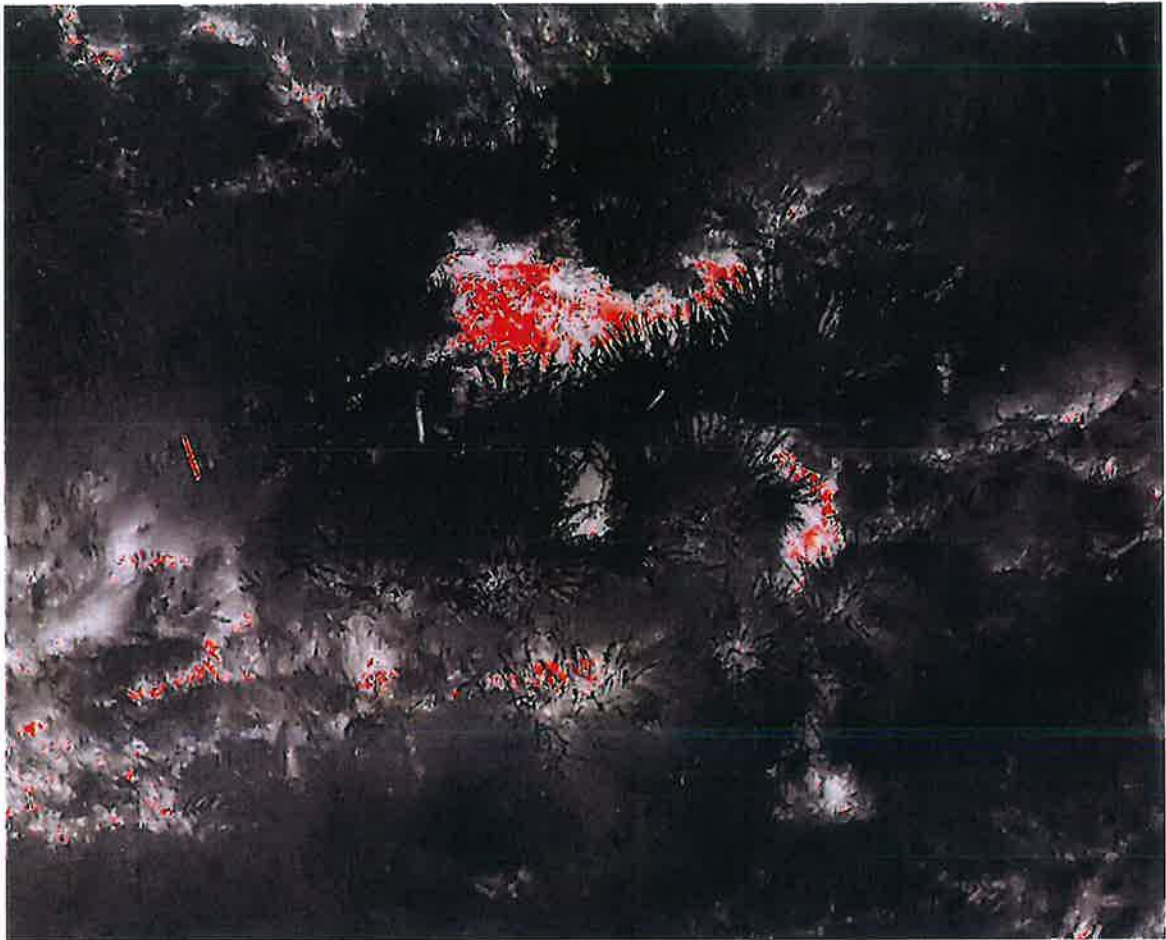
### **1. Biodiversity Surveys**

The Environment Officer continues to undertake biodiversity surveys and monitoring throughout the year to inform maintenance and capital works and develop the boards understanding of biodiversity across the district.

The boards new DJI Matrice 4T thermal drone has been proving effective in conducting environmental surveys, saving a large amount of time allowing us to cover large areas easily. The thermal function has been excellent in revealing hard to find and concealed species, such as potential nesting birds. The capabilities of the thermal drone go further though, and have been used to map out underground badger setts.







## **2. Winter Bushing and Cleansing**

Bushing works will commence in November along with the cleansing works, all bushes will be chipped onsite, all excavated silt will be deposited on adjacent fields, left to dry then spread and levelled across the adjacent land.

Where required, water levels will be lowered by damming lengths of the water course and the water over-pumped, if fish are evident, they will be carefully removed whilst the water is being lowered and transferred over the dams.

We have our own bushing budget outside of the Environment budget, fish relocation whilst cleansing is budgeted at £2,000.

## **3. Summer Cutting and Vegetation Clearance**

An alternate maintenance programme continues to be followed, and flail mowing will commence on priority watercourses in early April, the banks being cut every 4 weeks. Early flail mowing is necessary to prevent ground nesting birds. As with the high priority sites these watercourses can then be maintained at an earlier stage than previously. Therefore, the main summer cutting programme will still commence the first week of August.

The workforce will be presented with a 'Summer Cutting Brief' which will cover channel management in relation to balancing the benefits of flood risk management, agriculture, and the biodiversity values. The workforce will continue to conduct 'walk over' surveys

and the environment officer will also be used for bird surveys. The boards new drone is helpful in assisting with these surveys.

Where birds' nests are encountered, a minimum 10m length of bank will be left un-cut (5m each side of the nest) in line with the legislation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

#### **4. Owl Boxes**

A budget of £2,100 for repairing/replacing any existing boxes during 2026/27 has been set.

Boxes will be continued to be inspected this year, with any replacements to boxes or poles being made in January or February 2027.

The boxes are purchased at £245.00 each including delivery from the Wildlife Conversation Partnership.

#### **5. Recording by Machine Drivers**

The eight machine drivers will continue to record sightings on the Tom-Tom units; environmental sightings such as badger or fox holes in banks, water vole, mink and other specialist environmental sighting will be recorded. A new code for otter has been added to trackers and drivers have received educational materials on otter field signs, and encouraged to report this so the Environment Officer can investigate and map. A map showing badger and water voles is shown on page 34.

All sighting information is passed onto the GLNP and in turn to the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC).

Budget request of £1,700 for Tom-Tom repairs/updates.

#### **6. Water Levels**

Water levels will continue to be controlled via the Boards 34 pumping stations and/or the gravity channels associated with them.

The South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) water levels were raised to their summer levels by the EA in late March and will be lowered back to winter levels in November, this obviously affects the gravity flows from the catchments into the SFFD. Water levels within the catchments will be held back where requested, this will help to enhance the aquatic biodiversity associated with the watercourses and along the banks.

#### **7. Invasive Non- Native Species (INNS) and Biosecurity**

The identification and eradication of INNS is important for the protection of our native species. INNS are expanding their population and geographical area, often to the detriment of native species. Early identification of INNS is critical in the control of their spread. The workforce will receive INNS refresher training with each annual cutting brief, and a reminder of the biosecurity policy and procedures.

The location of any INNS will be reported to the Environment Agency where required, and the environment officer will map the locations on GIS for board records.

INNS locations will also be reported to the GLNP to help determine population trends and distribution.

We propose to continue with our mink control project with the aim to enhance water vole conservation and also to use as a contribution towards the Board's BAP. This will compliment other efforts from surrounding IDB's.

The budget for biosecurity has been increased to £2,000 this year as the first full year with the policy and protocol in place. This money can be used for equipment, disinfectants, and cleaning.

**8. Operation Fly Swat Partner**

We estimate a contribution of £4,400 as a partner contribution which far outweighs the collection, removal and tipping fees the Board would incur if we carried out all this work ourselves.

**9. Grass Snake Nesting Sites**

The budget for grass snake nesting sites has increased from £800 in 2025/26 to £2000 for 2026/27 with plans to create and install 3 new artificial nests within the boards catchment, with money allowed for maintenance of existing sites.

**10. Wildflower Meadow – Cooks Lock Project**

The budget for environmental maintenance of the Cooks Lock site is £1600. This will cover seed, materials, plant, and labour to enhance the habitat in the board owned paddock and surrounding the pumping station.

**11. Pollinator Projects – Butterfly enhancements of Pumping Stations**

In line with new actions to enhance pollinator habitat in the BAP, £800 has been allocated to butterfly projects for pumping stations for 2026/27. This money will be used to develop pollinator friendly native species in select and appropriate locations around pumping station buildings, and in the space at the boards office in Swineshead.

**12. The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP)**

Being a partner (c£400 per annum) we have a statutory duty under the UK Habitats Regulations to report on progress against the management actions on an annual basis, and the information is presented in the Action Plan.

We report on subjects such as land drainage, shoreline management (if applicable), coastal oil spills, water framework directives, chemical weed control, non-native invasive species and water abstraction.

**13. Kingfisher Nests**

£1,000 has been budgeted for kingfisher habitat creation. This may come in the form of instalments when reprofiling banks or enhancing existing habitats via drilling holes to attract them.

#### **14. Hirundine Bird Boxes and Sound Systems**

In line with new BAP actions for martins, swifts, and swallows, we will be installing new nest boxes on select pumping stations. As it is difficult for the species to take to nest sites initially, evidence shows that using bird sound systems will attract them to the site and increase success. £1,000 has been budgeted to start this work in 2026/27.

#### **15. Lincolnshire Bat Group**

The Environment Officer is going to join the Lincolnshire Bat Group on behalf of the board, which is £10 per year. The benefits of connecting with this group is gaining free expert bat advice and habitat enhancements, and they can offer assistance with surveys on a voluntary basis.

#### **16. Slip Repairs Seed**

The budget for slip repairs seed has increased from £600 to £800. In line with new actions in the BAP and with guidance from Amber Hill Butterfly Conservation, we will look to create specific butterfly friendly seed mixes, with species that are low maintenance and have no impact on bank management.

#### **17. Environmental Training**

Environmental training for the workforce will be undertaken with the summer cutting brief, covering a refresher on working around badgers, water voles, and biosecurity.

A budget of £1,000 has been proposed which will include any relevant ecological training needed for the environment officer, and could include relevant training courses needed to advance with species licencing that will benefit the board long-term.

**18. Total budget allocation:-**

Environment and GIS Officer	£ 25,879
Operation Fly swat partner	£ 4,400
Fly Swat Labour & Plant	£ 4,000
Fish relocation for winter cleansing	£ 2,000
Barn Owl Box Maintenance	£ 2,100
Tom Tom Repairs and Updates	£ 1,700
WNNMP	£ 400
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust / GLNP Service Level Agreement	£ 300
Biosecurity	£ 2,000
Ecological Training	£ 1,000
Reptile hibernacula sites	£ 2,000
Slip Repairs Seed	£ 800
Lincolnshire Bat Group Membership	£ 10
Cooks Lock Project	£ 1,600
Hirundine Bird Boxes and Sound Systems	£ 1,000
Kingfisher Nests	£ 1,000
Butterfly Projects for Pumping Stations	£ 800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 50,989</b>

# Annual Check of Black Sluice IDB nest boxes – 2025

Boxes checked by Alan Ball on dates shown and with Emily on 06/06.



Box	BTO	Grid Ref	Location	Type	Date	Con
1365	DYF	TF152227	Dyke Fen Pump	Pump	26/05	Jackdaw
1366	RSI	TF167251	West Pinchbeck (Black Hole Dr )	Pump		n/c
1367	RSI	TF166257	Haconby Fen Pump	Pump	19/05	empty
1368	RSI	TF166266	West Pinchbeck (Starlode Drove)	Pump	26/05	Jackdaw
1369	RSJ	TF165271	Dunsby Fen Pump	Pump	19/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86484 & 85
1370	RSJ	TF164279	Rippingale Fen Pump	Pump	19/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86487 & 88
1371	BFF	TF162284	Dowsby Lode Pump	Pump		n/c
1372	DOF	TF167294	Gosberton Pump	Pump		n/c
1373	RSQ	TF164318	Neslam Fen Pump	Pump		n/c
1374	RSV	TF168331	Quadring Fen Pump	Pump	06/06	Jackdaw – 1 chick EM86576
1375	RSV	TF168333	Billingborough Fen Pump	Pump	20/05	empty
1376	RSG	TF170346	Horbling Fen Pump	Pump	20/05	empty
1377	RST	TF174364	Swaton Fen Pump	Pump	20/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86499 & 500
1378	RST	TF176370	Donington Ing Pump	Pump		n/c but <b>BARN OWL</b> thought to have bred successfully
1379	RST	TF177375	Helpringham Fen Pump	Pump	24/07	<b>BARN OWL</b> – 3 chicks GE07575 - 77
1380	RSH	TF186397	Bicker Fen Pump	Pump	21/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – 1 chick GR95441 (needs briar cutting)
1381	RSU	TF206425	Great Hale Pump	Pump	06/06	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86566 & 67
1383	HKF	TF185466	Heckington Pump	Pump	06/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – 2 chicks & 4 eggs
1384	SKF	TF207469	South Kyme Pump	Pump	10/07	Barn Owl – failed now roosting (may relay)
1384A		TF200470	Track to above (mitigation 2025)	Pole	06/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – 4 eggs
1385	EWV	TF159484	Ewerby Pump	Pump	18/09	Failed – but now on 4 new eggs
1385A	EWV	TF152480	Track to above ( m 2025)	Pole	18/09	<b>Barn Owl</b> – 2 chicks GE07600 & 651
1386	SKG	TF194507	Damford Grounds Pump	Pump	06/06	Decommissioned for works
1386A		TF188503	Addn pole near above (m 2025)	Pole	18/09	<b>BARN OWL</b> – failed on 1 egg
					06/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – failed on 5 eggs
					06/06	Decommissioned for works
					06/06	Jackdaw – 3 chicks EM86571 - 73

2973	PAH	TF192484	South Kyme (Paddington House)	Pole	06/06	Jackdaw – needs clearing	Cl
2802	BSG	TF236477	Gill Bridge (Barry Hall)	Pole	06/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – failed on eggs	
2803	BSH	TF205529	Hart's Grounds (Andrew Means)	Pole	06/06 10/07	<b>BARN OWL</b> – 4 eggs female = GE07874 2 chicks ringed GE07524 & 25	
2804	BSM	TF204484	Maryland (Pocklington Bros)	Pole	06/06	Jackdaw – 1 chick EM86575	
2969	BST	TF248464	Holland Fen (Two Hundred Fm)	Pole	06/06	<b>BARN OWL</b> – failed GE07874	
3170	KME	TF281388	Kirton Meeres - Pick's Barn	Pole	27/07	Not used	Cl
3169	KSK	TF341370	Kirton Skeldyke	Pole		n/c	
3165	BFK	TF340359	Kirton Bucklegate	Pole		n/c	
1387	WYB	TF359400	Wyberton Marsh Pump	Pump		n/c but <b>KESTREL</b> known to have fledged successfully	
1388	KIR	TF343350	Kirton Marsh Pump	Pump		n/c	

## BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

### ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - 04 MARCH 2025

#### AGENDA ITEM 10

#### 2025 BUTTERFLY REPORT

### **Amber Hill Butterfly Garden Report to Black Sluice.**

2025 was the perfect antidote to the dreadful 2024 season (apart from a few bitter disappointments such as the Hairstreaks and the Brimstone, but more of those later....) This year was the closest we've had to a true 1976 style summer, with hot, record breaking temperatures and almost wall to wall sunshine from April to September – but minus the terrible drought of 1976. Such a shame, after three separate major heatwaves in June and July, that it all came to an abrupt end at the end of July with much wetter and cooler weather for the rest of the season. But by then we were desperate for rain anyway! If it's proved one thing, it's that I was right in putting down the appalling 2024 season to the atrocious weather. We've now had the exact opposite results, totally weather driven.

Of course, even with a favourable winter, fantastic spring, and incredible summer weather, the butterflies could only work so many miracles to retain anything like their former glory after what was officially the worst butterfly season on record, But they never fail to impress! Most did comparatively very well, a few did excellent, a few actually did not do well at all, and NONE had their best year ever, breaking new records. But I cannot agree with Butterfly Conservation's controversial remarks of it only being an average year. Our garden has always mirrored the local countryside and - apart from the lack of new records being broken - it was far better than being just an average year.

This was undoubtedly the most advanced year I have ever witnessed - even more so than 1976 and those older than me, claim it was earlier than the classic 1949 season. So much so that BC's annual Big Butterfly Count was timed when most species were way past their best. I have never agreed with that system of recording the status of our butterflies anyway, but certainly not this year. I believe that many of the species would have gone on to produce substantial third or even fourth broods if the weather had continued overly pleasant - but from August onwards it was actually below par.

Many butterflies normally associated with May were flying in April, and here we had our first (female) Brimstone on 21 June. But there lies a tale: we had very few Brimstones in the new brood, a mere 8, matching last year's low numbers. I think the low numbers were general although a few woods I visited seemed to have decent numbers, although I cant say for certain whether those woods normally do far better with Brimstones. I had noticed during May that the normally very noticeable full grown larvae were almost absent, so the alarm bells were ringing. Why this should be, I really don't know but we will do our best to help the species pick themselves back up again, even if it means breeding some on in protected cages. Of course, the butterflies have to get through the winter first, and even though the survival rate for over-wintering Brimstones is far higher than their Nymphalid counterparts, 8 is a very low number, compared to 105 Peacocks that were seen! The other major disappointment were the arboreal Hairstreaks - hardly any have been seen for the last two years running due to wind, wind, wind!

The Small Copper did very well. Here it had a good season overall comparatively, and noticeably more widespread over all three broods than the norm. However, the expected big numbers in brood 3 never materialised, unlike at the stronghold Kirkby Moor where all 3 broods were in the hundreds.

Similarly with the Comma – I was expecting a huge second brood but it didn't happen, most likely the effects of the downturn in the weather at a critical moment.

Small Tortoiseshell continues to struggle whereas the Peacock produced a definite first-ever partial second brood. Although it appeared to be much more numerous, it was still way below its old totals. On the whole, species fared much better than we dared imagine being possible after last year, and it must be said that when writing up the annual records, whilst not going down the BC route, it did strike me that only a few had an above average year, and none had their best ever. It was just so lovely to see so many species – common and rare – in what appeared to be decent numbers, day after day. Data is very important but can cloud the overall issue.

Not counting the Red Admiral, which is nowadays probably mostly a resident species, the only migrant to put in a special appearance nationwide from July, was Clouded Yellow with quite a few being seen in Lincolnshire and 2 in our garden, though only briefly. On the diurnal moth front, we had singletons of the rare Four Spotted, and the Jersey Tiger which really spread its wings north this year.

The main host plant of the Common blue - bird-s-foot trefoil - faced extinction on the meadow, presumably due to the over abundant Six-spot Burnet moth that uses the same host plant, so again they had to be removed to a nearby massive meadow type habitat. It is growing back now and the second brood of the Common Blue did not seem affected.

The Dutch Elm Disease that so heavily returned last year has certainly left its mark, with the three most easterly woodland garden trees dead. There has been no sign of further attack this year, all we can do is hope and pray.... and keep planting new ones! My only regret in this context is that we did not plant disease resistant ones in the early years.

The dyke bank is looking much better after it being missed out from being attended to last year, so hopefully that will once again be an extension to our meadow, bringing more local butterflies into our area where we can look after them.

Here is the **species breakdown**. Note there is much more green this year. \*day-flying moth.

<b>Brimstone.</b>	Potential calamity for this species, mystery acute shortage of larvae.
<b>Brown Argus.</b>	By far its second best year.
<b>Cinnabar*.</b>	Matching last year but half of 2023.
<b>Clouded Yellow.</b>	Only 2 in what was a good Clouded Yellow year.
<b>Comma.</b>	Its second best annual total but all done in the first brood!
<b>Common Blue.</b>	One of its better years.
<b>Common Carpet*.</b>	Again none seen following their breakthrough in 2023.
<b>Dusky Sallow*.</b>	Just 2 seen.
<b>Essex Skipper.</b>	An average year but very short-lived.
<b>Gatekeeper.</b>	The best performing of the Browns.
<b>Green-veined White.</b>	An above average year.
<b>Holly Blue.</b>	An uninspiring year for the Holly Blue.
<b>Humming-bird Hawk-moth*.</b>	One of its better years.
<b>Jersey Tiger*.</b>	In a year of abundance and expansion for this marvellous moth, it was good to see one here for the first time.
<b>Large Skipper.</b>	Apart from the low count and short flight period, one of its better seasons.
<b>Large White.</b>	One of its better years.
<b>Latticed Heath*.</b>	Still struggling to get established. Just the one seen but one more than 2024!
<b>Meadow Brown.</b>	Above average numbers but nothing like the Gatekeeper.

<b>Mint Moth*</b>	Its best year since 2010 and its fifth best year. First ever partial third brood.
<b>Orange Tip.</b>	Only one more than last year, so a mediocre performance.
<b>Painted Lady.</b>	Another poor year for this migrant and therefore out of our control.
<b>Pale Straw Pearl*.</b>	The mystery demise of this once abundant micro moth continues but we did have three sightings, the first since 2022.
<b>Peacock.</b>	A good year, including the highest hibernated count and the first ever partial second brood.
<b>Purple Hairstreak.</b>	Another disappointing year again mainly due to the relentless wind during their flight period.
<b>Red Admiral.</b>	Not as numerous as perhaps expected in this special year.
<b>Red Underwing*.</b>	Only 5 seen but nevertheless its highest score to date.
<b>Ringlet.</b>	2018 when we last saw decent numbers of the Ringlet. I wonder why?
<b>Scarlet Tiger*.</b>	Disappointing to only see one after its first time last year with 3.
<b>Silver-ground Carpet*.</b>	Still low numbers – just the three.
<b>Silver-washed Fritillary.</b>	<i>Fresh female seen, hoped to have seen more.</i>
<b>Silver Y*.</b>	One of the poorest years to date for this normally abundant migrant moth.
<b>Six-spot Burnet*.</b>	Another year where there were many too many! Foodplant almost gone!
<b>Small Copper.</b>	Its third highest annual total with potential for more.
<b>Small Heath.</b>	A bit of a shock for its numbers to be less than last year!!
<b>Small Skipper.</b>	<b>No change. The mystery continues.</b>
<b>Small Tortoiseshell.</b>	Little improvement. In severe national decline.
<b>Small White.</b>	Statistically slightly down but they always seemed in good numbers.
<b>Speckled Wood.</b>	A rather disappointing year but this is a shade loving butterfly.
<b>Wall Brown.</b>	I was hoping that the good summer would bring this butterfly back inland but it was not to be....
<b>White Admiral.</b>	Possible sighting flying around the top of a honeysuckle stand.....
<b>White-letter Hairstreak.</b>	Their lowest numbers since their 2021 breakthrough – all down to the relentless wind during their flight period.
<b>Yellow-barred Longhorn*.</b>	Another good year.
<b>Yellow Shell*.</b>	Recovery after last year's drop off.

## 2025 BUTTERFLY OF THE YEAR:

### **Brown Argus**

As the season progressed there were numerous potential candidates for the eventual butterfly of the year. For example Peacock, Comma, Small Copper, but for different reasons they did not sustain their original promise. Which left me with the two that did: Brown Argus and Gatekeeper. Because the former went on to have easily its second best year, as opposed to the Gatekeeper's joint fourth with 2019, I declare for the sixth time the Brown Argus to be our Butterfly of the Year. The first species to have managed this accolade six times – a true flagship species.



**BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - 04 MARCH 2025**

**AGENDA ITEM 11**

**Mink Eradication 2025-2026**

**Local Stats**

Across the Black Sluice district, there are 48 traps in total. Of these traps, only 6 have caught mink in 2025, with 9 mink being caught in total.

**National Stats**

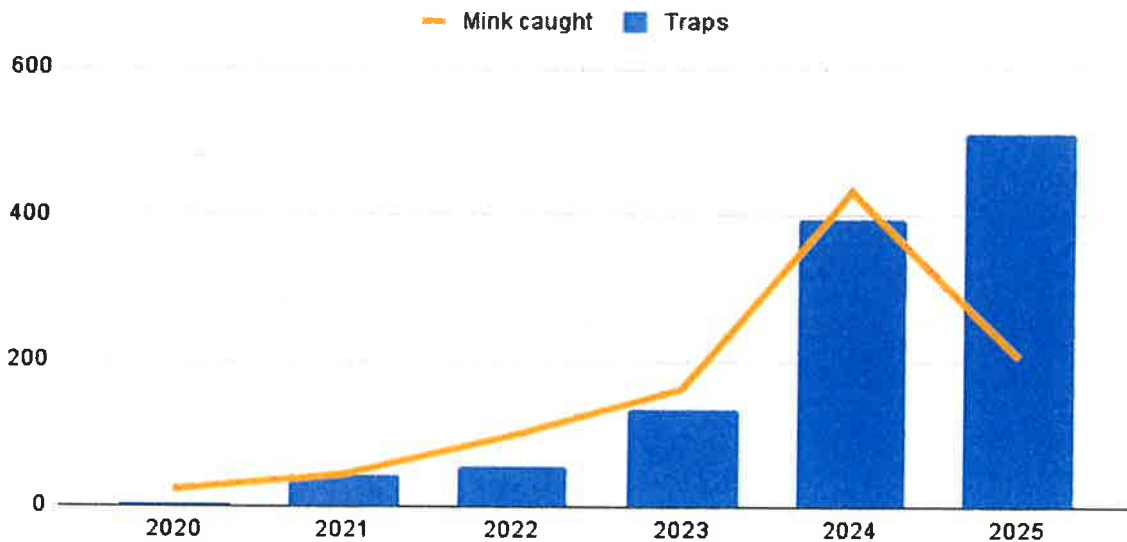
In 2025, 2274 mink were caught across the UK.

**Lincolnshire Stats**

From 2020 to date, 215 mink have been trapped in Lincolnshire.

The graph below shows WRT efforts in Lincolnshire since the beginning of the project:

**Lincolnshire mink trapping effort**



At the end of 2025, WRT caught 962 mink in Lincolnshire since we began in 2020.

In 2025, despite increasing the number of traps in Lincolnshire by 30%, we caught less than half the amount of mink compared to 2024. We are now entering the latter stages of our project as we target the last remaining elusive mink, move traps around and target the last few waterways that have not yet been trapped.

The data is positive and shows a decline in the number of mink trapped since 2024, which has resulted from a large increase in traps that were placed – proving that the programme is effective.

Waterlife Recovery Trust are still expanding, as a charity, they have recruited new Project Officers in the following counties:

- East Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire
- South Wales
- Kent

Furthermore, they have applications with Natural England to extend their range into central England & South-East England. If secured, they would cover 47% of the UK.

### **Volunteers**

The WRT is asking for anybody who would be interested in volunteering for a trap to come forward. The map below shows where traps are located. Several of these have reliable volunteers already, but specific ones such as the one near the Black Sluice base in Swineshead are currently only looked after by staff members who are 35 minutes away – It would be great to find some more local volunteers.

As we enter the later stages with fewer activations, the time spent volunteering is likely limited to perhaps 30 minutes per month, maybe even less.

If you are interested in taking on a trap, please get in touch with the Environment Officer.

# Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

## Policy No: 55

### Badger Policy

Review Dates:

Original Issue	24 June 2025
Board Approved	24 June 2025

#### 1. Introduction

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (BSIDB) is committed to the protection and conservation of badgers (*Meles meles*) and their habitats. This policy has been put in place to ensure the legal and ethical management of badgers during the boards drainage operations.

The policy outlines the Board's recognition of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, and its requirements for working in areas where badgers may be present. All works affecting badgers or their setts, will be conducted with due consideration for their welfare and in accordance with legal obligations, particularly those specified under the CL27 licence. The board holds a high-level of responsibility to prevent harm and disturbance to badgers, their setts and their foraging habitats.

#### 2. Legal Framework

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 is the primary legislation for the protection of badgers and their setts in the United Kingdom. Unlike other species legislations, the Badger Act 1992 is unique in that it is in place to protect badgers from cruelty and harm, focusing on animal welfare compared to enhancing numbers and conservation.

Under the Act, it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure, or take a badger.
- Disturb a badger while it occupies a sett.
- Damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a sett.

#### 3. Natural England CL27 Badger License

The Natural England CL27 Licence allows drainage boards to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes. The licence is held by all operatives and staff of BSIDB that work in the field and may encounter badgers and their setts as part of their daily duties. Full terms and regulations of the license and its usage can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/badgers-licence-to-interfere-with-setts-for-drainage-purposes>.

Following CL27, drainage operatives and their registered assistants are able to interfere with a badger sett by means of:

- Cutting bank vegetation with hand tools or tractor mounted flail

- Cutting bank vegetation and processing with a purpose-built harvester
- Cutting mid-channel vegetation with a 360 excavator
- Reforming banks with a 360 excavator
- Desilting drainage beds with a 360 excavator
- Maintaining low-level drainage culverts with a 360 excavator

All field operatives and staff who may come into contact with badgers and their setts will hold a registered CL27 licence issued by Natural England.

### **3. Responsibilities of BSIDB**

BSIDB holds numerous responsibilities to ensure the protection of badgers and their habitat, to act as good environmental stewards, and to abide by the regulations set out by Natural England as holders of the CL27 license. Failure to follow these regulations, can result in the removal of licences and potential further penalties.

The board will also follow the latest good practice guidance set out by ADA for working around badgers, which can currently be found at: [https://www.ada.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ADA CL27 Badger Class Licence Advice Note Sept 2021.pdf](https://www.ada.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ADA_CL27_Badger_Class_Licence_Advice_Note_Sept_2021.pdf)

#### **3.1 Avoiding Disturbance**

The board will ensure that no sett is disturbed, destroyed or blocked unless authorised under the CL27 license. In the first instance, all cases will be assessed to try and prevent working near a badger sett. Planning ahead can prevent and minimise potential legislation breaches. For example, working from the opposite side of the bank from an active sett.

Where avoiding disturbance is not possible, the board will operate under the strict regulations of the CL27 license and preserve the badger sett to as full extent as possible, and only destruct a sett in a last resort circumstance to preserve public health and safety. The board will restrict channel works around setts to as short a time frame as possible to minimise disturbance.

#### **3.2. Surveying and Monitoring**

Excluding routine channel maintenance (e.g., vegetation cutting), prior to any planned work a badger survey will be conducted by the boards Environment Officer or a suitably licensed ecologist to identify the presence of badgers or their setts within the proposed work area.

During the course of any work conducted where there is a badger sett, continuous monitoring will be undertaken to ensure no disturbance outside of what is legally permitted under license occurs. For large projects, post-completion surveying will be undertaken to measure any lasting impacts on the badger population.

Field operatives of BSIDB will contribute to the long-term monitoring of badgers and their setts within the boards area, by reporting any sightings via remote TomTom trackers. This data will be analysed and contribute towards project planning and the boards Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

### **3.3 Training and Awareness**

BSIDB will routinely provide badger specific training to all staff who operate in the field, and any external contractors involved with a project. Staff will be trained and competent in identifying badgers, their setts and field signs to ensure they are alert and operating safely. Staff will also understand the legal protections afforded to badgers under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the potential penalties that may come from disobeying legislation. Field workers will also remain trained in how to report any sightings of badgers and their setts through remote trackers in order to keep the boards records accurate and up to date.

### **3.4 License Reporting**

When the board is going to conduct works that interfere with badgers and their setts under licence, the board will contact Natural England at least 5 working days in advance to action being taken, with the following information:

- Site name
- Location address
- Map of the site (with an indication of where badger setts are located)

Detailed records of all surveys, licence applications, and mitigation measures will be kept by BSIDB. These records will ensure compliance with legal obligations and serve as a point of reference for future work.

All staff holding a CL27 license are responsible for recording and reporting details when operating under the licence, and a return of the records must be sent back to Natural England by January 31<sup>st</sup> each year. Returns are to be made even if the licence has not been used in a given year.

### **3.5 Timing of Works**

Works will be scheduled, where possible, to avoid the badger breeding season, which typically spans December to June. Any activity within this period that may disturb setts or badger activity will require special attention to minimise risk and comply with licence conditions.

Under CL27 licence conditions, the board will not conduct bank reformation and desilting operations where there are badger setts during the months of February, March or April as this is the most sensitive breeding time for badgers.

### **3.6. Emergency Protocol**

If a badger or a sett is unexpectedly encountered during works, all activities will cease immediately. BSIDB will consult with the Environment Officer or a licensed ecologist to evaluate the situation and determine the best course of action.

