

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
3rd March 2026 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 S Harrison (Maintenance Director)
Miss E Askew (Environment Officer)

Guests: Mrs M Haggerty (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership)
Mrs Louisa Williams (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)
Mr Ed Kirby (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)
Mr Mark Tarttelin (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)

2598 Recording the meeting - Agenda Item 1

Board Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2599 Apologies for absence and welcome guests - Agenda Item 2

There were apologies for absence from Mr W Ash,

The Chairperson welcomed and introduced guests; Mrs M Haggerty (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership) plus, Mrs L William, Mr E Kirby & Mr Mark Tarttelin (all from the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust).

2600 Declarations of interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

2601 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 4th March 2025, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2602 Matters arising - Agenda Item 5

There were no matters arising.

2603 To update on Biodiversity Action Plan action progress 2025/26 - Agenda Item 6

The Environment Officer updated the Action Progress for 2025/26. The report was taken as read with anything notable to be addressed within the environmental report.

Mr R Welberry noted there was a colony Daubenton bats living underneath the Claydyke pump and he was interested if they were still using this pump as their habitat.

The Environment Officer was unsure and will make investigations.

2604 To review the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2026/31(Policy No.11)-Agenda Item 7

The Chairperson offered thanks to Officers from Black Sluice IDB and Mrs M Haggerty from GLNP who helped produce the Biodiversity Action Plan and make it a readable document.

The Environment Officer updated and gave an overview of how the Biodiversity Action Plan was put together to make it a more digestible report than before. The species were prioritised differently so we know what to focus on specifically and the categories of **must**, **should** and **could** were introduced.

- **Must** refers to species that are impacted directly by the Boards work, they are protected species that live in the drainage channel.
- **Should** refers to species that are declining and we should be supporting them.
- **Could** refers to species that do not need help, and the Board would like to support them as they exist within the district. These species might be easy wins for the Board in terms of Biodiversity targets.

There is a more comprehensive Species and Habitat audit compared to the previous Biodiversity Action Plan. This covers a wider range of Habitats that may be present in the Boards area going into more detail especially with the invasive and non-native species. There have been more photographs added and specific detailed maps to make it more engaging. The actions are precise and achievable actions that are more targeted and relevant compared to the ones in the old plan which were unattainable and irrelevant to the work of the Board. This copy of the Biodiversity Action Plan can be taken as read unless there are any comments or anything notable to add or share.

Mr P Holmes questioned if there had been any success with the nesting in the artificial kingfisher habitats.

The Environment Officer stressed there is kingfisher activity in the area, yet it's not known if there is nesting activity yet. She added it can take up to 2 years for nesting in artificial habitats to occur. The monitoring will continue over the next few years.

The Maintenance Director pointed out the artificial kingfisher nesting would take some time to re-establish after the considerable repairs to the bank.

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

2605 To receive a report on environmental work completed in 2025/26 and recommendations for proposed works for 2026/27 - Agenda Item 8

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

1 Owl Boxes

There is no good news to report as it has been the worst year on record within the whole of the southern half of England. With a harsh wet winter leading into a dry hot spring / summer prey numbers were down so there was nothing for the owls to feed on. Due to staffing challenges, we were not able to monitor all the Owl boxes as fully as normal. However, it is unlikely the results would have been different. The owls themselves weren't nesting or producing eggs. Those that were laying eggs were giving up on them very quickly. Further, it was a bad year for Kestrels and out of the 34 boxes we only had 1 brood of kestrels. We hope for better results this year.

Mr R Welberry questioned if the jackdaws made any difference to the owl numbers.

The Environment Officer noted jackdaws can take over but this was not the issue this year.

Mr R Welberry noted there was a different design of owl box.

The Environment Officer pointed out this box hadn't been successful and therefore was not adopted.

2 Early Flailing Works

The Maintenance Director updated work is progressing with early season cutting and flailing on major pump drains. Plus, work is continuing for the Environment Agency contract for medium consequence watercourses to do the H&S cuts and to do their early season cuts as well.

3 Control of Mink

The Environment Officer updated the Board continues to partner with Waterlife Recovery Trust on mink eradication. The Board no longer holds any responsibility for managing any traps. Mrs M Haggerty asked if the Board would make a financial contribution to the Waterlife Recovery Trust.

4 RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh.

The CEO updated he met with the Manager of RSPB Frampton Marsh recently. Water levels are low when they should be at their peak at the end of March. They are experiencing problems with their broken pump and coupled with one of the hottest, driest summers in 2025 all this means the nesting birds are short of a food source. A proposal was made to the Executive Committee to use the underspend from the Environmental budget to loan the RSPB the Boards 6-inch pump and top up the water as far as the funds would stretch. This was approved and RSPB Frampton Marsh welcomed working in partnership with the Board.

The Maintenance Director updated he met with the manager of RSPB Frampton Marsh and agreed a location for the pump to go onto site. The RSPB have obtained

a new extraction licence as the one in place is too restrictive for our higher capacity pump. Currently, they are just waiting for the Eel rose from the EA. Then the pump will be moved to Frampton Marsh next week to start filling the reservoir back up again.

Mr R Welberry remarked on the amount of rain we have had it is surprising the water levels are low.

5 Operation Fly Swat

The Maintenance Director updated on this situation which is not improving. The Board pays a contribution to this service, yet due to the perceived contravening of a Health & safety policy the flyswat operatives will not retrieve litter from dykes and drains. Therefore, the Black Sluice operatives are asked to retrieve the rubbish. There is a not only a waste transfer issue plus a waste storage issue as Black Sluice are asked to store what could potentially be contaminated waste in their yard. This is unacceptable. The Maintenance Director highlighted he would like to meet with the council to discuss it and suggest they write a new Health & safety method statement for their operatives.

Mr P Holmes noted as an individual he could contact the council to report fly tipping without having to contribute.

The CEO queried with the Boston Borough Council representatives if there would be scope to discuss this matter with the new administration.

Cllr C Rylott agreed this could be possible and to contact the leader of the council Cllr D Broughton and the portfolio holder Cllr C Butler who are probably both unaware of any issue.

Mr P Holmes suggested that the Board don't pay the contribution.

The CEO echoed this sentiment unless things return to the original partnership.

6 Bat boxes and Surveys

The Environment Officer updated we are in a turnaround period with regards to bat boxes which had been installed in inappropriate locations. However, this has been resolved in the new BAP with actions including the installation of Bat boxes in carefully considered locations. Currently, we are steadily removing old Bat boxes. Bat boxes can only be removed once a survey has been completed. Going forward the positions for Bat boxes will be more considered and well thought out.

During the Summer of 2025 there were 9 confined space detailed surveys completed at 9 pumping stations by an external consultant. These were carried out as the Board was completing some work in the lower pump rooms underground. There were no Bats detected or even any signs of bats. The areas surveyed were deemed as negligible for Bat roosts, so they are an unlikely habitat for bats in the future. This gave a valuable insight into the locations of Bat boxes and the potential value for bat roosting. New boxes can be considered for locations going forward.

7 Eel Screens

The CEO updated this time last year the Board had been given some exemptions for eel screens. They were for only one year and with the condition that we agreed

with the Area Fisheries Officer by 30th September 2025 how we were going to fit the fish & Eel less damaging pumps. We now have a long-term exemption which is dated to the December following the year we have planned for refurbishment. The refurbishment will include fish and eel friendly pumps which are less damaging and more expensive to fit. Currently we are trialling these pumps at Chain bridge and Donington North Ings which will allow us to report the difference in cost of refurbishment compared to the cost of fitting the new pumps. Ultimately all of the refurbishments are reliant on attracting Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding from the EA and DEFRA.

9 Grass Snake Nesting Sites

The Environment Officer updated in spring last year we designed, created and installed two new reptile hibernacula sites which are for hibernation and artificial incubators. The nesting sites are upcycled old gabion baskets filled with different natural materials which will breakdown and create a warm, moist environment. The new design is more appropriate and better reflects their requirements and natural needs of the snakes. This is the first winter for the new nesting sites, which are located at Great Hale and Kirton Marsh. After examination of the site at Great Hale the signs are positive and definitely shows signs of usage. As the weather turns warmer more monitoring can be done.

10 Wildflower Meadow

The Environment Officer updated that an area of land adjacent to Cooks Lock is being managed as a wild meadow area. We were supported by Boston Seeds who created specific seed mixes for the soil type. It was hoped this would increase the chances of it becoming a better habitat. Unfortunately, this was an unsuccessful venture, largely due to the quality and condition of the soil. However, in the next few months we will look at doing something there again.

Mr R Welberry noted that wildflower seed is very difficult to germinate and suggested plugs may have been more successful although it is more costly.

11 Bug Hotel

The Environment Officer pointed out the Bug Hotel is adjacent to the office. There is nothing to report it will just continue to be maintained.

12 Badger Sets

The Environment Officer updated that annually Badgers continue to present the same concerns and problems for the Board. One current health and safety concern which poses a risk and ultimately a financial cost for the Board can be seen within a bank near Surfleet. Due to the nature of that environment the Board can only operate on one side of the bank. Badgers have started to take over that side of the bank and most of the Sets are forming and appearing from the top where the Board needs access. This poses a long-term health and safety risk as well as a hazard to the integrity of the bank. The operations department are looking to do something to stabilise the bank. However, from February to April, is the sensitive breeding season so currently no work can take place. However, we can consider our options from May onwards. Due to the locations of the Badger sets the Board would have to obtain a license from Natural England to mitigate the badgers which would incur a charge. Over the coming months the Board will have to explore our options but currently we cannot do anything.

13 Pollution Incidents

The Environment Officer updated there were no major incidents over the last year. There is a small-scale issue currently on Villa Lane which is on-going. There is a small amount of pollution discharging into one of the small ditches which has been reported to the EA and is waiting for them to inspect this. In terms of a different type of pollution there had been an issue with littering at Chain Bridge by B&M Home Stores. This was caused by the deliveries taking place outside and therefore litter was becoming a problem blocking the weed screen. Environmentally, this impacted on the nesting swans. Once this had been persistent for a couple of years a positive solution unfolded when B&M and the Board worked together for a conclusion. B&M now accept deliveries in a compound which has removed the litter problem.

14 Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP)

This Partnership and its funding will continue.

16 Artificial House Martins Nests

Taken as read with no Changes.

18 The Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP)

Taken as read with no changes.

19 The Environmental Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards.

This ADA document is available upon request or can be found on the ADA website

20 Environmental Tracker Reports

The Environment Officer updated the map of the environmental tracker report which is prompted by reports from the workforce on their GPS tracker. Some species have only been added in the last year so it will take some time to build up a stronger report.

Proposed Works and Environmental Involvement in 2026/27

1 Biodiversity Surveys

Biodiversity surveys will continue this year but will be slightly different with the introduction of the thermal drone. The new drone is proving effective at improving ecological surveying for nesting bird and Badgers.

2 Winter Bushing and Cleansing

The Maintenance Director updated the Board continues with the bushing activity as normal and hopes to be completed by end of March.

3 Summer Cutting and Vegetation Clearance

The Maintenance Director updated the Board continues with the cutting and vegetation clearance as normal and hopes to be completed by end of March.

4 Owl Boxes

The Environment Officer updated there are no significant changes here with the budget remaining the same. The cost of Owl boxes has remained stable. We continue to assess if any boxes need changing and purchase a couple of boxes should there need to be any replacements.

5 Recording by Machine Drivers

The Maintenance Director updated the Board is looking to purchase three new TomTom units for the new machines.

6 Water Levels

Taken as read with no changes.

7 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and Biosecurity

The introduction of Biosecurity policy and protocol and reporting of Non-Native Species is all quite new to the Board. This is just something that long term records will develop. We will just remind the workforce what the species look like. Any non-native species that are found will be reported to the Environment Agency. It may be the landowner's role to address this issue. But it is the Board's role to ensure we don't spread any Non-Native Species.

Mr M Rollinson queried which invasive species are recorded on the Environmental Tracker Reports Map and does this refer to Chinese Mitten Crabs.

The Environment Officer noted the invasive species the drivers are confident recording are likely to be plants like Himalayan Balsam. The Board doesn't have any personal reports of Chinese mitten crabs or in our areas. Although they are present in neighbouring Boards.

Mr R Welberry noted that was good news then queried if there were any crayfish.

The Environment Officer confirmed the Board doesn't have any reports of crayfish either.

Mr M Tartelin noted the Chinese Mitten crabs were in the SFFD they are very invasive and in large numbers and are difficult to control.

The Chairman and Mr M Rollinson agreed they understood that, from the ADA Environmental Day.

Mrs M Haggerty questioned if there is any budget for supporting the Waterlife Recovery Trust for their work with mink who do work on your behalf.

The CEO stressed the Board used to contribute and also used to provide Volunteers, but the Trust were keen to manage themselves.

Mrs M Haggerty pointed out the Trust doesn't make a point of asking for a contribution but most IDB's they are working with are providing a contribution and it is appreciated.

The Chairperson asked how many traps are managed by the Trust rather than other individuals other than the Boards.

Mrs M Haggerty stressed that most of the traps are managed by Volunteers the Waterlife Recovery Trust pay for the equipment and employ project officers to support the Volunteers. They also fund the scientific work.

Mr R Welberry praised the Waterlife Recovery Trust stating they do a very good job.

8 Operation Fly Swat Partner

Taken as read with no changes to the predicted contribution.

9 Grass Snake Nesting Sites

The Environment Officer updated the budget has been increased as the aim is to build another three hibernacula sites for nesting this year and maintain the sites that we have currently.

10 Wildflower Meadow – Cooks Lock Project

Taken as read with no changes. The Board will be looking at opportunities to be more successful this year.

11 Pollinator Projects

This is in line with some actions on the Biodiversity Action Plan. The proposed funds have been allocated for Butterfly projects at pumping stations for pollinator planting at the specific sites.

12 The Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP)

Taken as read with no changes.

13 Kingfisher Nests

Funds have been budgeted for Kingfisher habitat creation. Previously the artificial habitat was created at Rippingale when the bank was being reprofiled. We will look at different alternatives and projects that have a head start.

14 Hirundine Bird Boxes and Sound Systems

The nest boxes are located at two pumping stations but unfortunately, there has not been any success. It is proven that sounds can attract the birds to the sites and they are more likely to uptake the nest. Funds will be allocated for setting up a sound system and some more nest boxes.

15 Lincolnshire Bat Group

Other Boards are members of their local community Bat Groups. In return the IDB's receive support and advice with Bat surveys and habitat enhancements. This is a good new networking opportunity for bat conservation.

16 Slip Repairs Seed

This budget has slightly increased in line with new actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan and guidance received from our partners at the Butterfly Conservation. In the Biodiversity Action Plan, we stress we will create specific Butterfly and pollinator friendly seed mixes for when we are already reseeding banks after reprofiling a bank. The recommendations from our Partners are to use only species that are no problem, don't impact negatively on the IDB, are easy to manage and enhance the work we are doing now.

17 Environmental Training

Taken as read with no changes.

18 Total Budget Allocation

The Committee AGREED the budget as below:

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 Maintanance	£	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 Sytems	£	1,000
Kingfisher Nests	£	1,000
Butterfly Projects for Pumping Stations	£	800
TOTAL	£	50,989

2606 To receive a report on Barn Owl Nesting Boxes for 2025 - Agenda Item 9

The Environment Officer presented the Barn Owl Report for 2025 to be taken as read.

2607 To receive the 2025 butterfly report from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation and Wildlife area, Amber Hill - Agenda Item 10

The 2025 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly conservation and wildlife area at Amber Hill were presented and noted by the BOARD.

Mr R Welberry left the meeting

2607 To receive a report on the mink progress for 2025 / 26 – Agenda item 11

The Environment Officer updated the report on mink progress. The eradication of Mink continues with 48 traps used across our district and only 6 Mink were caught in 2025 with a total of 9 Mink caught in the Black Sluice district. Fewer traps are going out compared to other areas and the Mink are moving to more northern areas.

Mr M Rollinson questioned if the traps from our area will be moved eventually.

Mrs M Haggerty confirmed this was the case, once it's established the area is free of Mink. A skeleton network will remain in place.

The Chairperson questioned how many Mink has been caught by Mr M Rollison on the SFFD.

Mr M Rollinson confirmed it was none this year but three last year.

The Chairperson noted that young Otters can be mistaken for Mink this time of year.

2608 To receive a presentation from Mark Tartelin on Bourne Fen Wetland Project - Agenda Item 12



River Glen & Bourne Eau

Mr M Tartelin referred to the presentation on screen and confirmed the Bourne North Fen site is in the very bottom of the Black Sluice IDB area between Baston Fen and Willow Tree Fen. It is strategic with its connections to several watercourses: the Glen on the south side and the Bourne Eau which runs into Bourne and the Wierdyke which runs into the top of the SFFD. Theoretically, you can run water from Rutland Water down to Boston. The stewardship has been on site over 20 years which brought on the aquatic plants which are part of the scheme today going forward. We are putting in a bank around the entire site to isolate it from the surrounding hydrology and allow us more control of the water within the site.

Phase one is being carried out now with the objective to have a wetland, and it has been pretty wet on site in the last couple of months with a challenge to continue working. We have been careful to avoid the Water Voles on the drain and Materials are being transported carefully around the bank, which has incurred additional expense but created habitat through the process.

The bulk of the work will be completed this month then we will rest the site for it to recover. There will have more control when the new drain flows round the site. Some areas are a foot above sea level. The term fenland derives botanically from a

number of species and certain conditions. Looking at the biodiversity of the site, the plans are 26 years on comes from Biodiversity plans from the late 1990's. The historic fen we had 1000 square kilometres in Lincolnshire which was reduced to 35 hectares by the end of the 1990's. We have put back 0.1% with Willow Tree Fen and Bourne North Fen will put back 0.03%. Nevertheless, it's a 30% increase in Lincolnshire Biodiversity assets for this kind of habitat. Then a study by the Environment Agency will be completed to look at the wider water control of this area in liaison with the Black Sluice. It is expected to take a year to complete the study AND Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust have been awarded funding.



Reedbeds where there is hoped Bittern will thrive

The CEO queried if there were any suggestions for the Board what might be done to develop the Board owned pit nearby or should it be left alone.

Mr M Tarttelin considered this, largely it could be left alone as it is in a good state, relatively small and isolated. A more detailed plan could be considered in a year or two.

Finally, we are making substantial progress thanks to the Lidar Mapping from Lincoln University and walking over the site there are new things every time. The funding for the works onsite largely comes from the Government Climate Change funding reducing the impact from oxidising peat. The Bourne North Fen site is worth approx. 250 households per year from the carbon emitted from the site through peat oxidization. But most of the peat on the top has gone. If the funding was just for surface peat, the LWT would not have achieved the amount funding to complete the works. Because underneath the surface there is clay and more peat that made the Bourne Fen Farm site eligible for the category in the funding. Over the years peat levels have altered with the peat under the surface oxidizing and the expanse of this reaches as far as Spalding and Crowland and oxidisation occurring on the banks of the Witham. This oxidisation is caused by the bacteria in the peat and the oxygen in the ground drains. This doesn't sound like too much of an issue, but it can a drop in the landscape by as much as a meter. It is critical to preserve the water table levels in summer and in the winter the levels are maintained.

The CEO queried the suggestion that more LAPSIP funding may become available for peat.

Mr M Tarttelin confirmed there is another round of funding. However, the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust cannot apply for any funding on this site again and the deadline for completing the work is the end of this month.



Great White Egrets that are larger than a Heron

Habitat wise the site is grassier in the south. It's a habitat for Egrets, Marsh Harriers, Red Kites, Swans and Roe Deer. This was a site for large cuppa Butterflies which could be reintroduced.

All of these works are partnership works which is the only way to make substantial progress.

The Chairperson questioned if the rodens would be covered in peat.

Mr M Tarttelin confirmed they would.

The Chairperson thanked Mr M Tarttelin for his interesting presentation.

2609 To receive changes working to the Badger Policy (Policy No 55)- Agenda Item 13

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

2610 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 14

There was no other business.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:33