



Ouse & Humber Drainage Board

MINUTES OF THE FULL BOARD MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT 24 INNOVATION DRIVE, HU15 2FW.

PRESENT					
Elected	Mr R Henley	Mr T Featherby	Mr C Mowforth	Mr R Nicholls	
Appointed	Cllr R Meredith	Mr B Blackledge	Mrs K West	Cllr P West	Cllr N Wilkinson
	Cllr V Aitken	Mr G Baxter			
APOLOGIES					
Elected	Mr T Screeton	Mr B Maclean	Mr J Sweeting	Mr J Wright	Mr J Hick
	Mr I Screeton				
Appointed	Mr J Traill	Cllr H Roberts	Cllr D Howard		
ABSENCES					
Elected	Mr J Scutt				
Appointed	Cllr L Bayram	Cllr N Marwood			
IN ATTENDANCE					
Officers		Mr A McLachlan – Chief Executive Officer			
		Mr R Towse – Director of Operation			
		Mrs A Larkin – Director of Policy & Finance			
		Miss L Smith – Executive Assistant			

Andrew McLachlan
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537. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

537.1. The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the Board noting apologies from Mr Traill, Mr T Screeton, Mr I Screeton, Mr B Maclean, Cllr D Howard, Cllr H Roberts, Mr J Sweeting, Mr J Wright, and Mr J Hick.

538. Declarations of Interest

538.1. Mr Mowforth declared an interest in the East Riding Solar Farm development, to be discussed as an ongoing planning item later in the agenda.

539. Additional Agenda Items

540. Health & Safety

541. Natural Environment

542. Minutes of the previous Full Board Meeting

542.1. The Chair drew attention to the minutes from the previous meeting on 6th November 2023.

542.2. It was PROPOSED by Mr G Baxter and SECONDED by Cllr P West and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board adopt these minutes as a true record of the previous meeting.

543. Matters Arising

543.1. The CEO confirmed that all actions from previous meetings had been resolved.

543.2. Mr Mowforth advised that he had spoken with a member of the public regarding the canal doors on the Market Weighton Canal and had advised them to contact the Environment Agency (EA).

543.3. The CEO advised that the Board were aware that the lock gates were not working as they should be, due to issues with the retaining wall and ship lock, adding that due to government funding rules, he suspected that the EA were struggling to access funding for this.

543.4. Board members discussed the concerns with the canal and the possible solutions, and it was acknowledged that during exceedance events, there had been an impact on the levels of the Foulness, which could have been avoided, had the ship lock gates opened.

543.5. It was requested that the CEO write to the Environment Agency to highlight the Board's concerns. **Action CEO.**

543.6. Cllr Wilkinson raised that he was receiving communications from concerned residents regarding the new development at Howden, and queried the financial support the Board would receive from the developer, to ensure there was no adverse impact on the existing town.

543.7. The CEO confirmed that officers had had significant involvement with the developers regarding the new development and advised of the proposed scheme.

544. Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting

544.1. The CEO presented the minutes from the Executive Committee on 8th January 2024.

544.2. No queries were raised by the Board.

545. Joint Consortium Committee

545.1. The Chair drew attention to minutes from the Joint Consortium Committee held on 29th November 2023.

545.2. The CEO explained that the purpose of the Consortium Committee was to agree a shared services budget, to form part of the overall budget to be agreed by the Board.

545.3. It was highlighted that the member-Boards had not formally appointed any members to the Consortium Committee for the 2023 meeting; this would be the Chair and Vice Chair plus two ordinary members. The current ordinary members were Cllr Aitken and Cllr Roberts.

545.4. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Aitken and SECONDED by Cllr Wilkinson and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Members appoint Cllr Aitken and Cllr Roberts to the consortium committee.

546. Amendments to Constitution of the Joint Consortium Committee

546.1. It was noted that at the last JCC the wording in the constitution of the Consortium required very slight amendments, specifically exchanging a pronoun for an adverb “each” to “both”, that the meeting was to be chaired on a rotational basis and that a substitute member could be called upon if insufficient numbers were available to attend the meeting.

546.2. The CEO requested permission from the Board for members of the JCC to make minor amendments to the constitution’s wording.

546.3. It was PROPOSED by MR BAXTER and SECONDED by CLLR MEREDITH and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Members appointed to the JCC are authorised to agree minor ‘non-structural’ amendments to the constitution wording with other members of the Committee.

547. Budget & Rate Setting

547.1. The CEO advised that income and expenditure were both mostly where had been envisaged for quarter 3.

547.2. Mr Mowforth raised that there was a £45k variance for plant hire costs; the CEO explained that this would balance between machinery and watercourse maintenance.

547.3. The CEO referred to electricity costs and noted that as had been requested, the current electricity expenditure was annotated on the expenditure chart, adding that as of December 2023, the cost was c£200k based on manual meter readings.

- 547.4. He continued that, due to the poor weather over the Christmas period, energy costs had been slightly higher than anticipated, with a spend of £30k assumed for the period up to March 2024.
- 547.5. Mr Mowforth highlighted that it would be helpful to see the electricity charges, to which the CEO confirmed that these would be shown on separate lines at future meetings. **Action CEO/DO.**
- 547.6. The CEO went on to set out the statutory position of setting the rate.
- 547.7. The CEO advised of special levy transfers and that a process had been undertaken to determine changes of land use, which had amounted to a rateable value of £83k being transferred, largely due to the expansion of quarrying activity at North Cave.
- 547.8. The CEO and Members discussed the development of solar farms and how this may impact the area and the special levy. The CEO intended that he would take relevant professional advice in relation to this.
- 547.9. In regard to reserves, the CEO explained that the Board's policy position was to achieve 75% of operational (maintenance) costs and confirmed that the proposed budget allowed for £95k to be transferred to reserves, subject to the outturn position in March 2025.
- 547.10. Cllr Wilkinson asked how the percentage of reserves had been determined and the CEO explained that this had been investigated and discussed with the internal auditor. He added that cash flow needs, exposure to uncontrollable costs such as electricity, and asset failure had been the main considerations.
- 547.11. Mr Featherby asked how much a replacement pump or substructure would be. The DO suggested that a hypothetical failure of a pump at Seavy Carr would cost around £100k.
- 547.12. The CEO reassured members that sub-structures failures were insured.
- 547.13. It was discussed by the Board that should there be any significant exceptional expenditure required, an exceptional board meeting could be arranged.
- 547.14. Mr Henley queried the absence of capital maintenance projects within the proposed budget. The CEO advised that there had been several projects in recent years to extend the life of pumping stations and structures, Howdendyke being the most recent. However, the ability to obtain external grant funding remained a challenge, due to government policy.
- 547.15. Mr Featherby suggested that the Board and Executive Committee allow for flexibility in relation to reserves.
- 547.16. Mr Blackledge asked if there were notable peaks in electricity usage, and if there was scope for the Board to generate their own electricity.
- 547.17. The CEO advised that electricity does fluctuate, as seen over the recent Christmas period, and there would be the potential for the Board to invest in generating electricity if there were capital funds to support this, but unfortunately that was not the case.

- 547.18. Staff costs were queried, and the CEO explained the inflationary staff pay increase, determined by the terms and conditions of the Lincolnshire Branch of the Association of Drainage Authorities, to which Ouse and Humber Drainage Board subscribes.
- 547.19. Cllr Wilkinson queried if officers were confident that a 3.3% increase was adequate. The CEO explained that in acknowledgement of the wider circumstances, he considered that the Board would manage at this level albeit without much room for manoeuvre, subject to being assessed again next year.
- 547.20. Cllr Aitken acknowledged the concerns of both ratepayers and the local authority and gave an overview of the discussions held within the Executive Committee.
- 547.21. Mr Featherby agreed that the anticipated operational budget should be sufficient for the Board to be able to carry out its operations.
- 547.22. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Aitken and SECONDED by Mr G Baxter and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board approves an estimated budget of £3,074,853.
- 547.23. It was PROPOSED by Cllr West and SECONDED by Mr R Henley and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that to meet the approved budget the Board set a rate of 21.2p£.

548. Invoices Paid and Accounts Settled

- 548.1. The DPF presented the schedule of invoices paid and invited questions from Members.
- 548.2. Mr Henley queried the recurring charges for HR fees, to which the DPF advised these were occupational health referrals and would be recharged to shared services.
- 548.3. Mr Mowforth queried a payment made to WH Plant Hire, noted as “second payment”. The DO confirmed that this was a hire charge for a machine.
- 548.4. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Meredith and SECONDED by Cllr Wilkinson and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board notes and approves the record of Invoices Paid and Accounts Settled to the value of £766,909.48 (net) for the third financial quarter of 2023/24.

549. Internal Audit

- 549.1. The DPF drew attention to the latest interim audit report, commenting that no concerns had been raised.

550. Public Sector Agreements

- 550.1. The DO informed members that there was a potential opportunity to expand PSCA work with the Environment Agency (EA), such as bank cutting and wracking works, and invited their views.
- 550.2. Cllr Aitken queried whether this would have an impact on the planned operational costs of the Board.

550.3. The DO advised that it would fall outside of major, core jobs for the Board, but that such additional work must be feasible and viable for the Board, whose primary function was to ensure effective management of land drainage within its area.

550.4. Mr Featherby queried when planned piling works would take place, and it was confirmed that these were due to commence in April and May.

551. Planning & Development

551.1. The DO advised that conversations were ongoing with the developer of the proposed large-scale residential development between the existing residential area and the railway station in Howden.

551.2. Cllr Wilkinson asked how surface water would be attenuated, to which the CEO advised that a greenway was to be installed with a swale where upon reaching the pumping station there would be an attenuation pond to function as flood storage. He added that any exceedance level would flood the swale and playing fields, thus protecting the housing and roads.

551.3. The DO added that the drainage scheme would not allow anything greater than natural run off to flow into the pumping station.

551.4. Regarding the East Riding Solar Farm development, the DO confirmed that there were no immediate concerns from a drainage perspective, and that discussions were ongoing regarding the legal protections for the Board.

551.5. Regarding North Cave quarry, discussions were continuing with the developer regarding next phases, including requirements for watercourse access, and the DO was to continue his monitoring of remediation and potential solutions for reported flooding issues.

551.6. The CEO advised that Yorkshire Water had contacted the Ellerker Parish Council in relation to Crabley Creyke, unfortunately with factually incorrect information, advising that the Board were responsible for the watercourse. He added that he had contacted Yorkshire Water and requested this information be corrected and parties informed as a matter of priority.

Ongoing Planning and Enforcement Matters

551.7. Objections had been submitted in relation to housing developments in Bubwith due to their proximity to a watercourse and drainage design concerns, to which Cllr Aitken expressed her support.

552. Capital Programme

552.1. The DO advised that the railings for the bridge at Carr Lane were at the Board's depot and would be installed soon.

553. Plant and Vehicles

553.1. The DO referred to the Plant and Vehicle Strategy, which had been adopted by the Executive Committee at its last meeting, subject to ratification by the Board.

- 553.2. Mr Featherby commented that the Executive Committee had requested this strategy to allow them to make better informed decisions and to assist with budget planning.
- 553.3. The DO explained that, as part of the strategy, he was seeking approval to purchase a second-hand long reach machine at £65k, and a commitment to replace the Massey Ferguson 7718 and Herder Flail with a Spearhead Alpha Self Propelled Machine at an estimated cost £209k. He added that these items had been provided for within the 2024/25 budget.
- 553.4. The DO continued that the Board had been hiring a long-reach machine for the last few years at a cost of approximately £38k, and that owning such a machine would allow for enhanced operations, such as during the winter.
- 553.5. Mr Mowforth queried the justification for this purchase, to which the CEO advised that overall, it would allow for more work to be completed 'in house' and in a timelier manner.
- 553.6. Mr Baxter asked if the machine could be sold if it was decided that it was not feasible to keep it after 18 months, to which the CEO advised this would be possible.
- 553.7. It was PROPOSED by CLLR WEST and SECONDED by CLLR WILKINSON and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board ratifies the Plant & Vehicle Strategy.
- 553.8. It was PROPOSED by CLLR WEST and SECONDED by CLLR WILKINSON and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board approves payments of £65k for Long Reach Excavator and a Spearhead Alpha self-propelled flail mower for approx. £209k (including a deposit of £51K).

554. Maintenance Update

- 554.1. The DO advised that de-weeding was currently 81% complete, commenting that late growth, along with the presence of maize and potatoes, had hindered operations.
- 554.2. The CEO advised that from next year, the Board would report progress of maintenance against the planned kilometres of maintained watercourses by activity type, rather than the total kilometres in the district.
- 554.3. The DO acknowledged that several slips had occurred within the area and advised that piling works had recently commenced in Bielby.
- 554.4. Cllr Wilkinson left the meeting.

555. Staff Matters

- 555.1. No matters reported.

556. Date of Next Meeting (s)

- Monday 29th April @ 9:30am – Executive Committee
- Monday 20th May @ 9:30am - Full Board
- Monday 29th July @ 9:30am – Executive Committee
- Monday 14th October @ 9:30am – Executive Committee

- Monday 4th November @ 9:30am - Full Board
- Wednesday 20th November @ 9:30am – Joint Consortium Committee
- Monday 20th January 2025 @ 9:30am – Executive Committee
- Monday 10th February @ 9:30am - Full Board (Budget & Rate Setting Meeting)