



Danvm Drainage Commissioners

MINUTES OF THE FULL BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER AT MOSS & FENWICK VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT					
Elected	Mr R Robinson	Mr N Welburn	Mr M Falkingham	Mr D Platt	Mr A Cooke
Appointed	Mrs G Ivey	Cllr D Nevett	Mr T Grady	Cllr R Tams	Mr P Maddison
	Cllr J McCartney	Cllr M Jordan	Cllr K Osborne		
APOLOGIES					
Elected	Mr R Thompson	Mr S Lomas	Mr W Platt		
Appointed	Mr C Crowe	Mr R Campbell	Mr J Gilliver		
ABSENT					
Elected	Mr D Atkinson				
Appointed	Cllr M Crane	Mr C Hogarth			
In Attendance					
Officers		Mr A McLachlan – CEO			
		Mrs A Larkin – Director of Policy & Finance			
		Mr R Towse – Director of Operations			
		Miss L Smith – Executive Assistant			

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311. Announcements

- 311.1. The Chair announced the passing of longstanding member Mr John Duckitt, and invited those present to stand and hold a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

312. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

- 312.1. The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting, noting apologies from Mr J Gilliver, Mr R Thompson, Mr C Crowe, Mr W Platt, Mr S Lomas, and Mr R Campbell.

313. Declarations of Interest

- 313.1. None declared.

314. Additional Agenda Items

- 314.1. None requested.

315. Health & Safety

- 315.1. The DO advised that there were no specific incidents or near misses to report.

316. Natural Environment

- 316.1. There were no matters to report.

317. Minutes of the previous Full Board Meeting

- 317.1. The Chair drew attention to minutes from the meeting held on 21st May 2024 and those of the extraordinary meeting held on 16th August 2024.
- 317.2. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Jordan and SECONDED by Mr P Maddison and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board adopt the minutes from the meeting held on 21st May 2024 as a true record.
- 317.3. It was PROPOSED by Mr N Welburn and SECONDED by Cllr R Tams and resolved that the Board adopt the minutes from the meeting held on 16th August 2024 as a true record.

318. Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting(s)

- 318.1. The minutes from the Policy & Finance Committee meetings held on 30th July 2024 and 15th October 2024 respectively were noted by the Board.

319. Matters Arising

- 319.1. Referring to minute 305.9, the DO advised that he had spoken with the Environment Agency in relation to the Japanese Knotweed [note this was incorrectly reported in the recorded meeting as Knotweed and should be Giant Hogweed], however they had not yet been able to offer a solution.

- 319.2. Regarding maintenance on Bulling Dyke, the DO confirmed this was still on the maintenance plan, however he was unable to provide a specific date as to when this would be completed.
- 319.3. Cllr Osborne advised Officers that he was awaiting a visit from the Environment Agency in relation to Bulling Dyke and would appreciate further information from the DO in respect of the maintenance.
- 319.4. In relation to minute 212.4, it was confirmed that the Canal & Rivers Trust [CRT] have completed significant works on the outfall into the dike and Soak dike.
- 319.5. The CEO updated he would come back to Cllr Osborne on the Bulling Dyke issue.

320. Financial Position

- 320.1. The Chair asked members to turn to the financial reports within the meeting papers.
- 320.2. The CEO explained that the financial figures are normally generated 2-3 weeks after the preceding month, but were completed slightly earlier this time due to the timing of the Board papers, and have since been updated.
- 320.3. The CEO explained that the increase in the income trend was due to the Board receiving the special levy payments earlier than usual.
- 320.4. He commented that in general, expenditure was as expected for the time of year, however due to the bids placed for the IDB Fund, revenue expenditure would exceed the planned position for the remainder of the financial year.
- 320.5. Cllr Osborne queried if there had been any changes announced in the recent budget that would impact the Board before next April. The CEO advised that he was not aware of anything.
- 320.6. Cllr Jordan queried when the next budget would be set by the Board, to which the CEO explained that the Consortium Committee were due to meet next week, whereby consortium contributions would be discussed and agreed, and presented to the respective Boards at their budget setting meetings in the new year.
- 320.7. Cllr Osborne queried whether the Board's maintenance contracts took into account any unplanned financial increases, to which the CEO confirmed they do contain a financial risk element, but this does not greatly impact the Danvm area.
- 320.8. Cllr D Nevett queried how energy costs had been affected. The CEO advised that electricity prices had generally come down and that the Board were remaining with Woldmarsh, having investigated other options, such as ESPO, and concluding that Woldmarsh offered competitive prices and allowed for more flexibility, should the Board wish to withdraw.
- 320.9. The DPF commented that the standing charges offered by Woldmarsh were fixed for two years and had decreased slightly.

320.10. The CEO confirmed that income was healthy, and that more had been received than originally planned, largely due to the IDB Fund, which reimbursed over £100k overspend in electricity for the previous year.

321. Drainage Rates Update

321.1. The DPF reported that 98% of rates income had been received, with an outstanding balance of £8,147, £3,612 of which was owed by ratepayers who had failed to pay.

321.2. An application for thirty liability orders had been made to Doncaster Magistrates Court on 16th October, to enable the Board to refer the debts to Rundles enforcement agency, who would now pursue recovery action on the Board's behalf.

321.3. It was suggested that the DPF may bring some cases to the Board at year end for write off if recovery was not successful.

322. External Audit

322.1. The Chair reported that the Annual Return document (AGAR) was returned at the end of September and that the auditor's report concluded that there were "no matters giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met."

323. Internal Audit

323.1. The Chair invited members to review the internal audit report for the final audit for 2023/24, highlighting that no matters of concern had been raised.

323.2. The Chair referred to other documents provided by the internal auditor, for the purposes of helping the Board consider and/or determine the following, as recommended by National Audit Office guidance:

- the independence of the internal auditor during the year under review.
- agree the internal audit programme of work, having regard to the authority's identified risks, during the year under review.
- be satisfied with regard to the competence of the internal auditor and that there is a signed letter of engagement in place.

323.3. It was PROPOSED by Mrs G Ivey and SECONDED by Cllr M Jordan and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board considers the independence of the internal auditor, agrees the internal audit programme of work having regard to the authority's identified risks, and satisfies itself with regard to the competence of the internal auditor, confirming there is a signed letter of engagement in place.

324. Invoices Paid and Accounts Settled

324.1. The Chair asked members to review the schedule of invoices and invited questions.

- 324.2. It was PROPOSED by Cllr M Jordan and SECONDED by Cllr J McCartney and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board notes and approves the record of Invoices Paid and Accounts Settled to the value of **£1,434,849.37** (net).

325. Public Sector Agreements

- 325.1. The DO advised that phase one of the Went works were nearly complete, with maintenance from Topham ferry bridge to the canal viaduct completed in the last two weeks. He confirmed that subject to EA go-ahead the same work would take place next year on the section upstream from Topham ferry to the railway line.
- 325.2. All trees were reported to have been cleared from the channel and the banks have been sided off.
- 325.3. The DO reported that he had held a recent meeting with the Environment Agency Fisheries and Biodiversity team who were satisfied with the works and progress.
- 325.4. Mr N Welburn queried if both banks had seen maintenance and if they had been pulled back to their original position. The DO advised that all tree works had been completed but that no works had been completed on the banks and that the IDB were only able to work to the specified remit given by the Environment Agency.
- 325.5. The Chair queried if there could be an agreement to complete this section of bank again next year. The DO advised that he was hopeful of this.
- 325.6. Mr R Robinson gave credit to the IDB for their persistence in this matter.
- 325.7. Mr Falkingham queried the situation with the Ea Beck. The DO confirmed he was aware that the channel needed clearing, however this was the responsibility of the EA and concerns should first be reported to them.
- 325.8. Cllr Nevett advised that he would raise these concerns with the Mayor of Doncaster.

326. Development Control & Planning

- 326.1. The DO reported that officers had held discussions with the developer of a large solar farm proposed at Fenwick and had agreed drainage principles. Additionally, officers had advised the developer that the Board was seeking legal advice in relation to a similar project in Ouse & Humber district and would respond in due course. He confirmed that there would be further consultation in the next stage of the DCO application process.
- 326.2. The DO confirmed that layout and drainage principles had been agreed with a developer of a large industrial development in Goldthorpe.

327. Capital Programme

2024 IDB Fund

- 327.1. The CEO gave an update on the £75m IDB Fund for national capital and recovery funding, explaining that £25m had been delegated to Civil Servants before the general election in July,

and therefore secured (Tranche 1). After some delay and uncertainty, the remaining £50m (Tranche 2) had been signed off in November by the Secretary of State for the Environment, thus also secured.

- 327.2. To date, Officers had been successful in securing £972k from the fund, however this was predicated on delivery of the works by 31st March 2025. The CEO explained that Tranche 1 funding was predominantly for “sunk costs” in respect of energy prices and damage to Board assets caused by the extreme poor weather in the winter of 2023/24.
- 327.3. In respect of pump repairs, the DO advised that replacements were being investigated for Blackshaw, Town clough, Kirk Bramwith, Goosepool, and Whiteley Bridge.
- 327.4. The Chair queried if this would be achievable, to which the CEO confirmed that orders were to be placed imminently and that a meeting was pending with an appropriate EA Officer and Fisheries & Biodiversity Team.
- 327.5. The CEO advised that Tranche 2 funding had been secured for a range of capital programme works, including for panel replacements in pumping stations, adding that a prioritised list was being compiled by the MEICA team in view to placing orders with suppliers as soon as possible.
- 327.6. He advised that a bid had also been secured for two mobile welfare and works units so that operational teams have temporary bases during scheme works and flooding events.
- 327.7. The CEO confirmed that if the procured works were deliverable at a lesser value, a smaller claim would be made unless a new scope could be agreed with the funder.

Clay Dike (New Cut)

17.7 – 17.9 and DN 02 removed from capital programme.

- 327.8. In relation to the Clay Dike scheme, the CEO confirmed that £350k had been received from the IDB Fund. He added that conversations had been held with landowners, and that Officers were considering deploying the Board’s operational team to carry out the works.
- 327.9. He explained that the works would include diverting the upstream section of Clay Dyke into Stoney Lane Drain [Upstream of the Pumping Station] to avoid hydraulic competition between the two catchments. After the main works were complete, any residual funding could be used to improve the existing watercourse downstream of the main works e.g. through regrading works
- 327.10. Mr Falkingham asked if the new cut would receive piling works, to which the DO advised that ground investigations were required to ascertain the requirement.

Depot Refurbishment

- 327.11. The CEO explained that at the last meeting, whereby an extraordinary meeting had been called, Board members had been asked to consider the options for welfare and office improvements at the Kirk Bramwith depot, however the recommended option was rejected by a majority vote.

- 327.12. The CEO had subsequently been instructed by the Chair to produce a detailed report of costed options that meet the legal requirements in respect of planning, building regulations and public authority procurement.
- 327.13. The CEO referred to the report provided by the Board's consulting engineer, who also has a building surveying division, where they had examined the previously proposed option and compared it to other potential resolutions.
- 327.14. Cllr McCartney queried the cost to instruct the consulting engineers to produce the report, to which the CEO confirmed it had cost approximately £5k.
- 327.15. The CEO stated that due to the Tranche 1 funding, the cost to refurbish the depot could now be met from revenue funds, rather than reserves.
- 327.16. Mr Grady queried if the Board's operational staff had been involved in discussions regarding the refurbishment, to which the CEO advised that there had been several comments made by current staff, and by some upon exit interview, regarding the poor, unsuitable working conditions.
- 327.17. Cllr McCartney, referring to the images on the report, agreed that such conditions were not acceptable.
- 327.18. Cllr Jordan highlighted that the building was situated in flood zone 3, and questioned how many staff used the building daily.
- 327.19. The CEO commented that it would be difficult, if not impossible to secure planning permission for a new building due to the flood risk designation, and that up to 11 staff use this area daily.
- 327.20. The Board discussed the possibility of moving sites entirely, however recognised that the PWLB interest rates have increased significantly in recent years, making this unaffordable.
- 327.21. It was PROPOSED by Cllr McCartney and SECONDED by Cllr Jordan that the Board consider approving Option 1 presented in the Mason Clarke report.
- 327.22. Members highlighted that the options proposed by Mason Clarke were significantly more expensive than the original proposal presented by the CEO at the extraordinary meeting, and questioned whether the original proposal could be considered.
- 327.23. The CEO explained, that due to the Board's standing orders, it was not possible for the same recommendation to be proposed to the Board within a six-month period, however, if the Board were minded reconsidering this proposal, the Board must first vote to suspend the standing orders.
- 327.24. It was PROPOSED by Cllr McCartney and SECONDED by Cllr Jordan and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board suspend the Standing Orders.
- 327.25. The Chair referred to the proposal made by Cllr McCartney, to proceed with Option 1 presented in the Mason Clarke report and then referred to the original proposal made by the CEO at the extraordinary Board meeting, and asked Members to vote on the same.

327.26. The CEO, for clarity, confirmed that the original proposal, detailed at DN28 on the capital programme, was to remove the redundant pumps from the pump house, insert suspended flooring and access ramps, and install two toilets, a shower room, mess, and office facilities to an estimated cost of £250k.

327.27. With the original proposal presented to Members, both Cllr McCartney and Cllr Jordan retracted their motion (to proceed with Option 1 of Mason Clarke's report).

327.28. It was PROPOSED by Mr N Welburn and SECONDED Mr Falkingham and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board proceed with DN28 on the capital programme and refurbish the existing depot to meet legal minimum standards to an expected cost of £250k.

327.29. The Chair affirmed that the standing orders were resumed.

327.30. Mr R Robinson was absent from the room for the following decision by the Board.

327.31. It was PROPOSED by Mr Maddison and SECONDED by Cllr Jordan and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Board ratify and approve the Capital Programme.

328. Maintenance Update

328.1. Cllr Tams raised concerns regarding Hensall village culvert.

328.2. The DO advised that feasibility work had been undertaken on the culvert and that the original culvert was within a coal mining area, affected by subsidence.

328.3. The DO explained that he had considered the best way to rectify this, including installation of a small PS or a diversion. Due to it being at such a low level, a diversion was not considered worthwhile. Therefore, discussions would take place with The Coal Authority (the funding body) regarding the installation of a low package pump station.

328.4. The DO reported that earlier in the season, a tractor and a low loader had been purchased which had improved overall efficiency.

328.5. He also reported that the Mecalac, purchased in 2023, had been especially useful due to all round efficiency.

328.6. He reported that significant improvements had been made with restoring watercourses to a reasonable operating standard, and that officers and operational teams were continuing to build relationships with landowners in relation to access, noting that minimal complaints had been received this year.

329. Staff Matters

329.1. The DO confirmed that both newly appointed operators were working well with the existing team.

330. Date of Next Meeting (s)

330.1. The dates of forthcoming meetings were confirmed:

- Joint Consortium Committee meeting - 27th November 2024
- Policy & Finance meeting - 21st January 2025
- Full Board Meeting - 11th February 2025