

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Upwell Internal Drainage Board
hosted at the Middle Level Offices, March on Monday the 18th May 2022

PRESENT

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| K Goodger Esq (Chairman) | P Hartley Esq |
| P Clabon Esq (Vice Chairman) | S Hartley Esq |
| H G Bliss Esq | J Kirk Esq |
| S A Calton Esq | A Quail Esq |
| C J Crofts Esq | J Quail Esq |
| R D Gladwin Esq | B Scott Esq |
| R Gott Esq | W Sutton Esq |
| G W Gowler Esq | P M Tegerdine Esq |

Miss Samantha Ablett (representing the Clerk to the Board) and Mr Carl Nunn (District Officer) were in attendance.

The Chairman enquired whether ALL Board members were happy for the meeting to be recorded. All members were in agreement.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from R Means Esq, B Rackley Esq, C N T Rose Esq and N R Russell Esq.

B.2009 Declarations of Interest

Miss Ablett reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman declared interests in minutes B.2028 and B.2038.

Councillor Sutton declared an interest (as a Member of the Middle Level Board) in any matters relating to the Middle Level Commissioners.

Councillor Sutton declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of Fenland District Council's Planning Committee.

Messrs A and J Quail declared interests in planning application (MLC Ref No. 539) received for Scott Oldroyd & Co.

Mr Gladwin declared an interest in planning application (MLC Ref Nos 409, 412 & 414) received for P J Farms Ltd.

Mr Tegerdine declared an interest in any matter in which Waldersey Farms were involved.

Mr Bliss declared interests in planning application (MLC 531) received for HG Bliss farm Ltd and minute no. B.2038.

The Vice Chairman declared an interest in planning application (MLC 531) received for HG Bliss farm Ltd and minute B.2028.

B.2010 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 24th January 2022 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2011 Rates Outstanding for more than One Year

Miss Ablett updated members on the amount of drainage rates that had been outstanding for more than one year and provided Members with a map highlighting several parcels of land for which no details were held. She also advised that a mapping exercise was being arranged by the Clerk in a hope to identify land ownership in the District.

RESOLVED

That Board members investigate ownership of parcels of land indicated on map presented at the Board meeting.

That the Clerk arranges for a larger map to be sent to the Chairman regarding Stonebridge Farm.

B.2012 Ouse Washes Section 10 Reservoir Middle Level and South Level Barrier Bank Works

Further to minute B.1980, Miss Ablett referred to a Newsletter from the Environment Agency dated March and April 2022.

B.2013 Amendments to the Constitution

Miss Ablett reported on the reconstitution of the Board.

She confirmed the instrument of Appointment had been signed by Defra and the number of agricultural representatives had been reduced from 20 to 14.

She advised the Assistant Clerk would be writing to the Councils shortly to advise them of the number of representatives they can appoint.

Miss Ablett reported the current number for a quorum was 10 and it had been agreed to reduce the number to 7. She advised the revised number for a quorum would be actioned by amending the standing orders and confirmed this was in hand. Miss Ablett advised that as the revised standing orders would not be presented to the Board for approval until the meeting in January 2023 it was imperative that at least 10 members were in attendance at that meeting in order to pass the resolution approving the standing orders.

Members enquired whether it was possible for the standing orders to be sent to both the Chairman and Vice Chairman, before the date of the inspection, for them to approve on behalf of the Board so as to reduce the quorum and Miss Ablett confirmed it was.

RESOLVED

That the revised Standing Orders be updated following the reconstitution of the Board before the inspection to be held on 6th July to ensure a quorum exists at the inspection.

That the Chairman and Vice Chairman be authorised to approve the Standing Orders on behalf of the Board.

B.2014 Roadway to Nordelph Pumping Station

Miss Ablett apologised this had not been actioned sooner, but reported the Assistant Clerk had recently contacted Norfolk County Farms Division and hoped the planings would be delivered shortly.

B.2015 Electrification of Cock Fen Pumping Station

Miss Ablett referred to an update which had been included in the Consulting Engineers Report and presented a map, together with notes provided by the Assistant Clerk, explaining the current position.

She reported that part of the access was owned by South Yorkshire Pension Fund, who were willing to grant access and right of way, but this was subject to payment of legal cost of £1,500 plus vat and a payment of £12,500 for the right of way and to cover maintenance of the track in perpetuity. She advised that South Yorkshire Pension Fund would prepare the agreement once these payments were confirmed by the Board.

Miss Ablett enquired whether the Board would agree to pay the legal costs and payment for the Right of Way.

Members agreed to pay the legal costs of which they were advised, but were not prepared to pay for a right of way that had existed for almost 50 years and for which no payment had ever been requested in the past. They enquired whether Mathew Tonks and Rory Ritchie were also being asked to pay for access along the track.

Members reported the request for payment was disappointing as the electrification of Cock Fen pumping station would be of benefit to all land owners.

The Chairman enquired whether Upwell IDB were being asked to pay the £12,500 for the right of way and to cover maintenance of the track in perpetuity or whether it was UK Power Networks as this was not clear from the correspondence received.

Miss Ablett advised she was unable to answer this question, but would ask the Assistant Clerk to respond.

Miss Ablett reported that a further right of way over another piece of land was currently being prepared and the Assistant Clerk was expecting a draft this week, subject to a payment of costs totalling £450 plus vat and £12 for copies from the Land Registry. She enquired whether the Board were prepared to pay these costs.

Members agreed to pay the costs of which they were advised.

Miss Ablett reported that after some considerable investigation work the Assistant Clerk had prepared a Statutory Declaration relating to ownership of the Pumping Station, which had been submitted to UK Power Network's lawyers who had raised a query relating to land within the area. She confirmed that the Assistant Clerk had arranged to inspect the land in question, with the District Foreman, and if possible, she would amend the Statutory Declaration accordingly to include the land or confirm the Board had used this as access for almost 50 years without being challenged.

Miss Ablett explained that UK Power Networks were also liaising with the Environment Agency for Deed of Grant for underground/overhead cables. She advised that the matter was in the hands of the Environment Agency's lawyers and confirmed that UK Power Networks were pressing for a response. Miss Ablett reported this matter was out of the hands of the Assistant Clerk, who was unable to advise when this may be resolved.

Members expressed their disappointment that legal matters relating to the project were taking so long and had still not yet been resolved and requested that the Consulting Engineer to confirm that prices would not increase in view of the delay

RESOLVED

That payment of both the legal costs and £12 for copies from the Land Registry payable to South Yorkshire Pension Fund and Mathew Tonks, together with Rory Ritchie be approved.

That the Assistant Clerk confirms whether Upwell IDB have to pay the £12,500 for the right of way and to cover maintenance of the track in perpetuity or whether it should be UK Power Networks.

That the Assistant Clerk enquires why an amount for the right of way is being requested by South Yorkshire Pension Fund at this time, when the Board has had right of way to the pumping station for almost 50 years.

That the Assistant Clerk enquires at how the amount of £12,500 has been calculated and whether this sum was negotiable.

That the Assistant Clerk explains why the Board were being asked to pay for the right of way whereas Mathew Tonks and Rory Ritchie, who also use the track for access, were not.

That the Consulting Engineer confirms that costs will not increase in view of the delay.

That the Assistant Clerk continues to chase UK Power Networks' Solicitor to resolve the outstanding matters with the lawyers of the Environment Agency.

B.2016 Asset Refurbishments – Grant-in-Aid

The Chairman reported that, at a meeting in February, 3 sites had been identified as requiring refurbishment.

Miss Ablett advised that surveys of these structures would commence soon and drawings would be produced, together with a business plan for a Grant in Aid application. She added it was hoped the refurbishments would be fully funded, but warned Members that this was not guaranteed.

B.2017 Contravention of Byelaws

Trees planted at drain from Nordelph Pump to Crouches Reservoir, running parallel to Popham Eau.

Miss Ablett apologised as a letter had not yet been sent to the landowner, however she advised the Assistant Clerk had arranged to meet the District Foreman on site to take some photographs before proceeding, as this could be a sensitive matter.

RESOLVED

A letter to be sent to the land owner/occupier advising of the contravention of bylaw requesting the trees within the 9-meter maintenance strip be removed.

B.2018 Nordelph Pumping Station – Right of Way

Miss Ablett apologised as she was unable to report any further on the matter, however she advised the Assistant Clerk had assured her she would be dealing with this as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED

The Assistant Clerk to review land registry for right of way past the pumping station that other land owners may have as soon as possible

B. 2019 Birchfield – Adoption and Un-Adoption of Drain

The Chairman reported that Mr Richard Gott had requested the Board adopt a new length of drain from Point 75 upstream to a new point 75a and de-main a separate length drain down from Point 76 to a new Point 76a. This was considered needed as the ditch/bank being gradients are such that Mr Gott's land is considered to be at higher than acceptable flood risk. If the Board adopt and maintain the drain up from Point 75 this will reduce the potential flooding.

RESOLVED

That the drain be adopted up from point 75 to a new Point 75a and Point 76 be relocated on the district map, effectively de-mained the end section of the watercourse between point 70 and the current point 76.

That a new District Map be produced and distributed to Members

B.2020 Joint Maintenance Works – Old Croft River

The Chairman reported that a meeting had been arranged with, Mr Heading, the Chairman of Manea & Welney DDC to discuss formalising the joint agreement concerning maintenance and development contributions, but unfortunately Mr Heading had been unable to attend. He advised that he was waiting to hear from Mr Heading regarding an agreement, following informal discussions.

B.2021 Clerk's Report

Miss Ablett advised;

i) COVID-19 Actions

That the majority of control measures have been removed now and normal office working has resumed (with the exception of trialling a degree of flexible working, which has been shown to be effective following the previous periods of enforced home working). Impacts now are largely confined to the high rates of COVID-19 illness cases in the UK.

ii) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

That an eighth Chair's Meeting was held on the 12th April 2022.

The meeting covered a wide variety of matters likely to affect IDBs. A summary of the key points and resolutions follows;

It was recorded that there had been a number of MLC staff changes over the period. These included the retirement of Deb Watts, Katie Hunt and Malcolm Downes. Also, Sarah Lemmon and Richard Lloyd had handed in their notice. New members of staff replacing them and linked with some restructuring of the finances and admin departments were Dave Bantoft (M&E Engineer), Sarah Bowd (Accounts Assistant), Polly Tomblason (PA Secretarial) and Claire Collings (Secretarial).

It was reported that following the successful telemetry grant bid for Local Levy £125K in grant had been secured and consequently an order had been placed for in excess of 45 new telemetry outstations. The MLC have tested the new system with the six stations they commissioned and were satisfied with its operation.

Training for Board members was covered and it was noted that ADA provide online training videos. Various methods for delivering these and recording attendance was discussed and it was finally resolved that the best way forward would be to ask all members to watch one or two videos a year and to record when they had been viewed. A record of who had watched which video would be retained and this information recorded at Board meetings and used to support DEFRA IDB1 returns.

A proposal to move from time charges to lump sum annual fees for planning and consenting matters was discussed and it was agreed that a proposal to move to this more efficient and effective way of working would be put to each Board. For similar reasons it was resolved that a proposal should be put forward which would reduce the scale of content reported to Boards under planning matters.

Inflationary pressures were touched upon and it was recognised that if this continues there will be pressure placed upon Boards to raise their rates more than has occurred in recent years. It was also recognised that along with these inflationary pressures there were increasing demands (with legal backing) evolving in relation to environmental gains and Boards should be aware of the costs of delivering on these. Examples are the government's commitment to protect 30% of all land by 2030 for the environment and of the Doubling Nature initiative in Cambridgeshire.

An update on work in relation to climate change and carbon reduction was given. Work currently in hand comprises of production of a carbon baseline for the MLC. Once complete the scale of the challenge to target carbon neutrality will be known and work will be undertaken to identify possible opportunities for reduction and mitigation, prior to production of a policy statement. During these next stages it is expected that Boards associated with the MLC will be similarly assessed and plan proposals made for them.

iii) Applications for byelaw consent

That the following applications for consent to undertake works in and around watercourses have been approved and granted since the last general meeting of the Board:-

| Name of Applicant | Description of Works | Date Consent Granted |
|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| R Palmby | Installation of a 100mm diameter steel pipe and outfall between points 128 and 129. | 26/7/21 |
| C Benjamin | Piping and filling of 15 metres of private watercourse alongside No. 1 Brimstone Close, Christchurch | 28/7/21 |
| Mr M J Smith | Erect a 1.2-metre-high picket fence and plant hedging over the Board's piped watercourse at Meadow Farm, Main Street, Welney | 10/02/2022 |
| Welney Parish Council | Remove Welney Parish Council Board to new position at Old Croft River, Welney | 12/04/2022 |

RESOLVED

That the action taken in granting consents be approved.

iv) Association of Drainage Authorities

b) Annual Conference

That the Annual Conference of the Association of Drainage Authorities will be held on Wednesday the 9th November 2022, venue yet to be announced.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a ticket for the Annual Conference of the Association for any Member who wishes to attend.

c) Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch

That the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association was held on Tuesday the 1st March 2022.

This was the first face to face meeting held since the COVID-19 outbreak but the format was restricted to the AGM only. It is planned however to reintroduce the popular and useful morning workshops for 2023.

Marc Heading was reappointed as chair with Councillor Doug McMurdo as vice chair. Topics covered included unsurprisingly red diesel, and water resources/the work of WRE.

Sofi Lloyd announced that Brian Stewart and Ian Hodge from the EA had recently joined the ADA Board and that DEFRA had asked ADA to liaise with them on the implementation of schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act. She was also pleased to be able to report that ADA had been instrumental in initiating an all-party parliamentary group with a remit to discuss and consider Sustainable Flood and Drainage Management.

Phil Hulme and Amanda Macloughlan spoke on behalf of the EA covering the challenging associated with significant staff changes at the EA and noted that with the capital program for this six-year cycle being double that of the previous one this would be generating considerable additional work load.

It was advised that this coming years revenue (maintenance) budget was £5.3M which was more than the previous year but what could be delivered within this budget could be impacted by inflation.

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 7th March 2023.

v) Smart Level System/District Wide Telemetry Bid

Further to minute B.1994(vi), the Clerk to report that orders have been placed to install the new telemetry system at all of the Boards Pumping Stations. Installation will be undertaken over the summer period.

vi) National Drainage Show & Floodex 2022

That the National Drainage Show & Floodex 2022 will be held at ExCel, London on the 23rd and 24th November 2022.

vii) Red Diesel

Following extensive lobbying and the efforts of ADA, DEFRA and Treasury have softened their stance on the potential loss of access to red diesel use by IDBs. Going forward then as long as the work undertaken by the IDB can be shown to have some agricultural benefit then red diesel use can continue. The exception will be construction works and works where the sole beneficiary is an urban area.

viii) Planning and Consenting Fees

Proposed changes to planning and consenting service supply charging

Two changes are proposed. The current arrangements and the proposed changes are outlined below.

1. The current arrangements for charging for Technical Services advice and support, for planning and consenting matters, is based upon a direct cost recovery arrangement. To achieve this all time spent on every item of work undertaken has to be logged and recorded in detail. This information is then pulled together and invoices prepared and checked before being passed to the Board Chairs for sign-off. This requires a considerable amount of time and effort and this time is of course included in

the eventual fees paid. It is considered that a more efficient model would be to mirror the one used for charging for Clerking services which is based upon a lump sum annual fee. This has a number of advantages. It reduces internal workload which in turn releases time to carry out productive work. It also allows Boards to budget for the fees knowing at the time of rate setting what the annual fees will be.

To ensure that a fair assessment is made it is suggested that the last five years of fees are looked at and an average taken. If there is clearly one or two years where one or two planning matters have impacted heavily upon the figures then an appropriate adjustment will be made. The final fee will be converted into a fraction of the costs of overall cost of supplying planning and consenting services for all Boards including the MLC and this percentage will become fixed until such time that a review is called for.

In addition, we will still actively encourage developers and their agents to enter into Pre/Post application contracts. This will help keep the overall planning costs to a minimum. We will also be looking to move more and more to lump sum charges for developers for the same reasons outlined above, i.e., to reduce internal administration work and costs where possible.

It is not proposed that this change will extend to other Technical Services work, such as surveys, catchment analysis, and refurbishment/replacement/improvement scheme work or associated advice which will continue to be logged and charged on a "hours spent" basis.

RESOLVED

That a lump sum fee arrangement be agreed in principle, and figures presented to the Board at their January 2023 meeting.

2. Many members have noted that the reporting in relation to planning application comments and responses is comprehensive. Again, it often takes many hours to produce such detailed reports for which the Board is charged. This time could be spent in dealing with and taking action on planning and consenting matters. There is also the issue of the potential time lapse between any planning/byelaw issue raising its head and the meeting of the Board. It is of course normally advantageous to take action as soon as possible after any issue had become apparent. It is therefore proposed that going forward the Board nominate who they wish to be copied in on all planning correspondence, for example the Chair and Vice-Chair. They will then be able to liaise with the Planning Engineer if they wish to and will be conversant with discussions being undertaken. The Board may also wish to delegate decision making for initial actions for bylaw infringements to the Board nominee/s.

To ensure that the Board is consulted on the most important matters it is proposed that when it is wished for a matter to be raised within the Board report then a request from the Chair can be made and a detailed report would follow. This would normally be the case where significant costs might be associated with enforcement, including perhaps incurring legal fees or where an unusually large or significant development is proposed.

Should the above change be agreed to, then going forward the Engineer's report will provide a list of all planning applications of interest to the Board and consents applied for/approved but unless requested by the Chair no detail will be provided.

RESOLVED

That no further detailed reports on individual planning matters be included in the Consulting Engineer's Report unless requested by the Chairman or Vice Chairman.

ix) Anglia Farmers

The Clerk will report that following the last meeting of each Board/Commissioners the Anglia Farmers electricity contract was renewed in October 2021 for a shorter period of 6 months to 31st March 2022 and this was due to the volatile energy market at the time. As there remains an enormous amount of volatility and uncertainty surrounding energy prices and as competition is very limited, it was decided that the Commissioners and Boards should remain within the Anglia Farmers buying group at the moment as there is likely to be little scope for us to negotiate better deals. The Clerk will also report a new contract has been signed for a 12-month period to 31st March 2023 with EDF Energy through Anglian Farmers.

The Anglia Farmers Energy team does not have to commit to buying energy for years ahead at the current price levels and the flexible contract that they have to buy energy from 1st April 2022 allows them to risk manage the portfolio for their Members, which means they will be well positioned to take advantage of any energy market normalisation ahead. When market conditions have settled down/normalised the Board/Commissioners will be asked whether they wish to remain with Anglia Farmers. But this may not be for several years based upon current market assessments.

x) Fens Biosphere

The Clerk will report that this project is on hold and will remain so unless and until Fenland District Council is prepared to engage with a redefined brief and vision for it.

B.2022 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

The Board considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers.

a) Bedlam Bridge Pumping Station

Miss Ablett referred to the Consulting Engineer's comments relating to the corroded pump bolts on pump 1. She reported that after the Boards meeting last year, the Consulting Engineer had advised the pump was not scheduled for an overhaul until post 2025 so the bolts should be replaced before then. She added that as it would be necessary to lower the water level to 400mm below normal winter stop levels to carry out the works the engineer had suggested the bolts be attended to in the summer.

Miss Ablett advised the cost was likely to be in the region of £1,200 and enquired how the Board wished to proceed.

Members agreed the pump bolts should be replaced in the summer

b) Nordelph Pumping Station

Miss Ablett reminded the Board that the electricity meter at the pumping station was broken and the dispute with Anglia Farmers, the supplier, meter operator and UKPN had been ongoing for 7 years.

She advised she had escalated the matter to the Chief Executive of Anglia Farmers and she had since been advised that with the assistance of EDF, the current supplier, Anglia Farmers would invite all parties to attend site to gain a consensus of opinion as to an agreeable solution and ultimately who should bear the costs of rectifying this. It was hoped that a meeting could be arranged as soon as possible after 6th June, giving sufficient notice to all parties to state their position and attend site.

Miss Ablett reported the Consulting Engineer had advised that UK Power Networks had quoted in the region of £5,500 for installing the supply and a CT cabinet. She advised that a waterproof enclosure would also need to be built to house the CT cabinet and the cabling to the pump panel at a cost in the region of £3,000.

She reported the Consulting Engineer had suggested that, until a solution could be reached that was acceptable to all parties, the Board should continue to receive estimated bills and dispute them when they exceeded the expected usage. She added that although this was not the best solution, it may prompt the supplier to push for a resolution.

Members agreed the Chairman and the District Foreman should attend the meeting with all parties, when arranged, to advise that the Board was not willing to pay for CT metering. They also approved the Consulting Engineer's suggestion to continue to receive estimated bills and dispute them when they exceeded the expected usage.

RESOLVED

i) That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.

ii) Bedlam Bridge Pumping Station

That the corroded pump bolts on pump 1 be replaced.

iii) Nordelph Pumping Station

That the Chairman and the District Foreman attend the meeting with all parties, when arranged, to advise that the Board was not willing to pay for CT metering.

That the Consulting Engineer continues to review the estimated electricity invoices and disputes those where usage exceeded his expectation.

B.2023 Finance Committee Report

The Chairman reported that no Finance Committee had been held since the last meeting of the Board.

B.2024 Capital Improvement Programme

Members considered the Board's future Capital Improvement Programme.

RESOLVED

That the Capital Programme be approved in principle and be developed in line with the development of the grant-in-aid business case for the asset refurbishments.

B.2025 Maintenance Work in the District

a) District Work Report – January – May 2022

The Board considered the District Work Report.

RESOLVED

That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.

b) Drainworks Programme 2022/2023

With reference to minute B.407, the Board gave consideration to maintenance work required in 2022/2023.

RESOLVED

That the programme be approved and the District Officers be authorised to undertake the necessary maintenance work.

B.2026 District Labour Board's Employee's Wages

Miss Ablett reported that Mr C Nunn was paid £2789.70 for 144 hours of overtime worked during the financial year 2021/2022.

B.2027 Chemical Weed Control

The Chairman advised that as the Board no longer undertook any chemical weed control this agenda item be could be removed from the agenda going forward.

B.2028 District Officers' Fees

- a) The Board gave consideration to the District Officer's fees for 2022/2023.
- b) The Board gave consideration to the expenses payable to Mr Goodger.

RESOLVED

- i) The Board agree that the sum of £3,600.00 be allowed for the services of the District Officers for 2022/2023 and to be split equally between the District Officers
- ii) That the Board agree that a sum of up to £920.00 for expenses be allowed and split between the District Officers as necessary.

(NB) – The Chairman and the Vice Chairman declared interests when these items were discussed.

B.2029 Conservation Officer's BAP Report

Members considered and approved the most recent BAP report.

B.2030 State-aided Schemes

Consideration was given to the desirability of undertaking further State-aided Schemes in the District and whether any future proposals should be included in the capital forecasts provided to the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED

That no proposals be formulated at the present time other than that already approved regarding asset refurbishments.

B.2031 Charges for hire of plant when engaged on private work

Consideration was given to whether any revisions were necessary in the Board's charges for hiring plant for private work (last reviewed – May 2021).

Flail mower

Present charge - £37 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages)

RESOLVED

That the hire charge be increased to £45 per hour.

B.2032 Environment Agency – Precepts

Miss Ablett reported that at the Environment Agency Flood Defence Committee meeting the committee voted to adopt an indicative 2% increase in the precepts on Internal Drainage Boards for the next 6 years commencing from 2022/23, with the ability to revisit annually should exceptional circumstances indicate this is required. The committee voted for a 0% increase (for exceptional circumstances) above the indicative 2% increase for the year ending 31st March 2023 – total of a 2% increase on the level of precept on Internal Drainage Boards for the year ending 31st March 2023.

The precept for 2021/22 was £55,928.00.

B.2033 Contribution from Developers

With reference to minute B.272(b), Miss Ablett reported that contributions towards the cost of dealing with the increased flow or volume of surface water run-off and treated effluent volume have been received.

B.2034 Review of Internal Controls and appointment of Internal Auditor

Members considered and expressed satisfaction with the current system of Internal Controls.

Miss Ablett reported it had been hoped other auditors would be invited to tender during 2021-2022, but due to the continued restrictions caused by COVID-19 this had not been possible. Following discussions with Whiting and Partners it had therefore been agreed that the current arrangement would be extended by a further year to allow sufficient time for the tender process to be carried out.

RESOLVED

That the Board approve the one-year extension of the appointment of Whiting & Partners as Internal Auditor and to support the proposal for a five-year contract to be tendered thereafter.

B.2035 Risk Management Assessment

- a) The Board considered and expressed satisfaction with their current Risk Management Policy.
- b) The Board considered and approved the insured value of their buildings.

B.2036 Exercise of Public Rights

Miss Ablett referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

B.2037 Annual Governance Statement – 2021/2022

The Board considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended on the 31st March 2022.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement, on behalf of the Board, for the financial year ending 31st March 2022.

B.2038 Payments

The Board considered and approved payments amounting to £252,370.80 which had been made during the financial year 2021/2022.

(NB) – The Chairman and Vice Chairman declared interests in the payments made to them.

(NB) – Mr Bliss declared an interest in the payment made to H G Bliss Farms Ltd.

(NB) – Councillor Sutton declared an interest (as a Member of the Middle Level Board) in the payments made to the Middle Level Commissioners.

B.2039 Annual Accounts of the Board – 2021/2022

The Board considered and approved the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2022 as required in the Audit Regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Return, on behalf of the Board, for the financial year ending 31st March 2022.

B.2040 Expenditure estimates and special levy and drainage rate requirements 2022/2023

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2022/2023 and were informed by Miss Ablett that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 75.64% and 24.36%.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That a total sum of £ 216,447 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
- iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £ 163,730 and £ 52,717 respectively.
- iv) That a rate of 23.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.
- v)
 - a) That a Special levy of £ 31,675 be made and issued to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
 - b) That a Special levy of £ 21,042 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levies referred to in resolution (v).
- vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levies by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.2041 Display of rate notice

RESOLVED

That notice of the rate be affixed within the District in accordance with Section 48(3)(a) of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

B.2042 Any Other Business

Nordelph Bungalow

Miss Ablett enquired whether the Board had received quotes for the work to the bungalow as requested at previous meetings. The District Foreman advised that he had spoken with one contractor, but they had not yet provided him with a quote. He enquired whether a camera survey should be undertaken to ascertain what drain repairs would be required.

Members agreed for a survey to be carried out and to review the report, when received, to consider what action should be taken.

RESOLVED

That the District Foreman arranges for a camera survey of the drain at Nordelph bungalow to be carried out and once a report is received for the Board to agree on any action required

B.2043 Dates of next Meetings

The Chairman wished to thank all Members who had assisted during the significant rainfall events as their assistance was much appreciated.

RESOLVED

That the next Meetings of the Board be held as follows, viz:-

- i) Wednesday the 6th July 2022 prior to which the District Inspection will be held at 5.00pm.

The Vice Chairman enquired whether there would be any objections to inviting some of the younger generation of farmers to the Inspection for a trip around the District to get an understanding of the work undertaken by the Board and this was approved.

- ii) Monday the 23rd January 2023 at 5.30pm.
- iii) Wednesday the 17th May 2023 at 5.30pm

.....
Chairman
23rd January 2023