

LOWER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the BOARD
held via **Zoom Conference Call**
on **Monday 21 September 2020 at 1pm**

Members of the Board Present

Chairman: S Batt
S Attwood
H Browne
C Buckwell
D Carnell
D Davis
D Dewar-Whalley
R Hall
J Lewis
J Mair
R Palmer
K Rowles
T Valentine
G Whelan

In attendance:

O Pantrey – Acting Clerk
L Rowland- Office Manager
L Carey – Finance Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from G Etheridge, G Fulton, S Mair and B Stone.

Non attendees - no response received from B Martin.

2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

None of the Members present declared a pecuniary and/or non pecuniary interest in any of the items to be discussed on the Agenda.

3. MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 2 December 2019 and 25 August 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes – Appendix 1)

All Members in attendance **AGREED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 2 December 2019 and 25 August 2020 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

RECEIVED a copy of the Action List of the Board held on 2 December 2019.

(As attached to these Minutes – Appendix 2)

No queries raised.

5. CHAIRMAN REPORT

The Chairman said all I will say is that COVID certainly caused us a great many issues as it has many industries. It may have held up our vision for the future, but we are still making good progress towards it. As may be shown over the next 18 months. Now that Oliver Pantrey is at the helm of the office, we are already adopting new ideas and processes. As I am copied in on all of the important email traffic, I can assure the Board you have an extremely talented Clerk managing the Board's affairs, very ably supported by Lorna Carey, Finance Officer, Lisa Rowland, Office Manager and John Davies, Works Supervisor. He explained that our Works Supervisor was personally responsible for taking charge for getting Harty and Leysdown Pumps repaired in very difficult circumstances.

The Chairman continued and said now that is all I will say as Chairman, as your Clerk's report will cover many aspects I would usually have commented on. As I have already read The Clerk's report there is nothing worse that reporting on the same information so I will now hand over to the Acting Clerk for his extensive report.

6. CLERK REPORT

The Acting Clerk thanked the Chairman and the Board for their support and forward-thinking ideas and updated Members as follows:

Covid Response - Covid-19 was dealt with in a sensible and efficient manner and allowed work to continue throughout the lockdown. Due to a lack of office staff present it was decided to not take phone payments which saw an enforced shift in how we receive our annual rates. Even with the changes we received similar figures to last year and will continue to monitor whether we offer phone payments in the future. There have been mixed feelings from the office staff regarding working from home and should the need for further lockdown measure occur we will take these into account.

Post-July - Our office was one of the first IDB's to return post lockdown and thus far there have been no confirmed cases from the office or work force. There is procedure for the work force to follow and visitors to the office are still being kept to a minimum. Since the change in management occurred in July there have been several major changes to the operations in the office.

Staffing - Lorna Carey has been installed as Finance Office and is currently assessing and reviewing existing systems and presenting any issues found. She will also be taking on rates as part of her job role in conjunction with the Clerk.

Health and Safety -The development of a new health and safety plan is now in the final stages before approval later in the year and this aims to set out a more concise approach from the Board regarding it's H&S responsibilities, while adding some missing/outdated elements such as company risk assessments.

Office Admin - The change over to the digital system for staff paperwork has happened and is subject to teething problems as learning progresses. Overall, the response has been favourable from the workforce, and it appears to be easing workloads in the office.

The rate book system referred to as DRS has been updated by Phil Camamile of the Kings Lynn IDB and we have agreed with the UMIDB to adopt the latest iteration. The quote for upgrading is due to go through Joint Services in the next few weeks but it is reasonable and provides the Board with a modern system from which to interact with stakeholders. It is hoped this improves the accuracy of our records and improves payment receipts.

Planning and consents work were taken on by Pete Dowling of Stour IDB on a short-term basis until we had decided upon a long-term solution. We thanked him and his Chairmen for allowing his assistance in a very tricky period. This work is now being handled by the Sustainable Planning Team at Kings Lynn IDB / WLMA after successful passing of new development strategies. Work will be sent there at our discretion and contributions will be sought after taking their advice. Some outstanding consents have been approved by the Clerk in conjunction with the Board Chair, Vice-Chair and Finance Committee relating to developments in Queenborough, Grain and Ridham.

EA Partnership - The Board continues to develop a strong relationship with the Swale EA asset team, and this has progressed to us working towards our first attempt at sea wall defence via the PSCA. There have also been contributions towards our emergency repairs especially around the Capel Fleet area. Sadly, the works on the White Drain and the fleet itself have been postponed until the new year.

Pumping Stations - Harty Ferry Pumping Station suffered a breakdown in the floods earlier in the year. This required pumps and 24-hour watches to be utilised. These repairs are now complete, and the pumps are ready for another winter. Thanks go to John and the work force for their efforts and ingenuity.

Leysdown Pumping Station received some heavy maintenance to its undercarriage to improve its efficiency.

Due to the fact we are replacing the pumps, hopefully in the next 2 years, the repairs carried out are designed to accommodate this time frame only.

The replacement of both pumping stations is now being put through a suitability study by Stantec (Formerly Peter Brett Associates). This study will then determine our eligibility for FCERM GiA but we should not expect any outside funding at this stage. We have received a contribution for this from our colleagues at the EA.

Works were carried out at Rushenden to replace pumps and make electrical repairs. This pump is still set for renewal under agreements with Homes England and Southern Water, but these have stalled over the lockdown period. We will need to grant a renewed consent for the replacement soon. We kindly received a contribution from our colleagues at the EA for this asset repair too.

Bells Pumping Station is due to have its internet connection restored this week. There has been an ongoing issue regarding data limit breach which is now being resolved by software blocks put in place by Lee Dickens after Intralan (our network broker) failed to notify us to the data usage.

We have been maintaining contact with Hull University and their eel monitoring program will continue into March next year. They have requested diversion nets be put into the watercourse leading up to the pumping station. They have also requested we pump at specific times due to eel migration. I have agreed to the former but informed them the latter was potentially hazardous in terms of flood defence. Alternating the duty pump was deemed a more appropriate request.

Training - Training has taken a back seat due to the lockdown and restrictions, but we have completed Abrasive Wheels renewals and completed a drone pilot test since July. The Clerk is also carrying on with AAT Level 2 studies and exams. We also managed to complete several tool box talks via Zoom.

The Acting Clerk apologised for the length of his report, but said it had been necessary as we had not had one for 9 months. He then asked Members if they had any questions.

C Buckwell asked if he could have some more information of the University of Hull eel project and he had visited the site last summer when the project was underway then and he had found it fascinating and would welcome some more information.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that he had requested that Dr Bolland produce a presentation for the Board and this would be shared with the Board when this had been completed.

D Dewar-Whalley asked the Acting Clerk to enlighten the Board on the breach of data issue at Bells Pump Station.

The Acting Clerk explained that the mobile data used had breached our 10GB limit and 96GB had been used, which meant that the extra used was chargeable. He explained this could possibly have been due to an application being left open over the

weekend by mistake. However, as Intralan should have warned us we are refusing to pay the extra charges at this time. He confirmed that hard blocks have now been put in place to stop this happening in the future.

D Dewar-Whalley agreed that we should have been informed by Intralan and the monies should not be paid, for what he considers is not our fault.

7. WORKS SUPERVISOR REPORT

RECEIVED the Works Supervisor Report Numbers 167 and 168.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 3)

No queries raised.

The Chairman said that it was important to mention that The Works Supervisor had done a lot of work with regards to the old mowers and that he was personally responsible for getting a 100% refund on them. He added that the new Shelbourne Reynolds mowers were now in place and the staff were over the moon with them.

8. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

REPORTED that B Martin, K Rowles and T Valentine have not yet completed their Register of Members' Interest form for the year 2020/2021.

9. MEMBERS LIABILITIES

The Clerk reminded Members of their responsibilities whilst an elected Member of the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board and went over the key points below:

“The Members have responsibility/accountability for the overall control of the IDB’s finances and therefore certain financial/fiduciary duties, breach of which could render them personally liable. These duties can be summarised as an obligation, in the context of this document, to act responsibly and with reasonable care in respect of the IDB’s finances and to properly and fully consider the implications of the IDB’s financial position. These rules are set by Government to make sure that no unacceptable risks are taken with public money. It is therefore very important that Members exercise independent judgment and proper care and diligence.”

The Clerk added that this was unusual for this to happen and this was just a reminder to the Board to be responsible.

H Browne asked if we had adequate liability insurance and if this could be confirmed by email.

The Clerk and Office Manager confirmed this was in place and would confirm the details to Members via email as requested.

10. POLICIES REPORT

RECEIVED a copy of the updated Governance Documents List and the amended Standing Orders for approval.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 4)

D Dewar-Whalley explained that the list of governance documents was for the Member's information only and he had been delegated by the Board to review all of the governance documents and a good system was now in place for their review.

J Lewis raised that we still had Chief Executive on page 5 of the Standing Orders document.

The Acting Clerk explained that the Standing Orders had been changed as an emergency to allow for the likes of this Board meeting to take place via video conference call in April 2020 and DEFRA had already signed off this amendment when the Chief Executive was in place. He confirmed that this would be replaced with Clerk when the document was amended in the future.

J Lewis confirmed he was happy with this.

All Members present **AGREED** the changes to the Standing Orders.

11. FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held 2 December 2019, 26 May 2020 and 6 July 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 5)

Minutes were noted and no comments made.

12. JOINT SERVICES MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Joint Services Committee Meeting held on 27 July 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes – Appendix 6)

Minutes were noted and no comments made.

13. INTERNAL AUDITORS END OF YEAR REPORT 2019/2020

RECEIVED a copy of the Internal Auditors End of Year Report 2019/2020 produced by David Griffiths on 13 May 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 7)

The Internal Auditors End of Year Report 2019/2020 was noted and no comments made.

14. END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS – YEAR ENDING MARCH 2020

RECEIVED a copy of the End of Year Accounts year ending March 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 8)

The End of Year Accounts year ending March 2020 were noted and no comments made.

15. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATES

D Dewar-Whalley confirmed that we were up to date with training for staff and that the fire training that had to be postponed was hopefully going ahead in November.

He added that our health and safety was excellent and we had not had any incidents which was very good.

D Dewar-Whalley also confirmed that he was going through the health and safety policies with the acting Clerk and the Upper Board.

He added that a problem we do have is the lack of reporting of close mishaps and we were working on that.

The Clerk confirmed that we now have an anonymous form in place for this. He said that no one had used this yet, but it was actively encouraged for them to do so.

D Dewar-Whalley said if there were any concerns about health and safety issues to look at the Works Health & Safety Group Meeting minutes attached to item 16, Appendix 9.

16. WORKS HEALTH & SAFETY GROUP MEETING

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Works Health & Safety Group Meetings held on 13 January & 28 July 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 9)

Minutes were noted and no comments made.

17. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RECEIVED the various planning applications the Board has commented on since the last meeting.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 10)

The planning applications were noted and no comments made.

18. CONSENTS

RECEIVED particulars of applications requiring the written consent of the Board.

(As attached to these Minutes - Appendix 11)

D Dewar-Whalley said that when he first joined the Board he didn't understand consents at all and he felt it was important that all Members should receive some training on consents to allow them to understand, as he now does.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that training for Members was on the radar and was ongoing. He explained that the Upper Board also had concerns regarding lack of training for Members in general.

The Acting Clerk reminded Members that a lot of useful information was in the ADA Good Governance Book and he confirmed that training on consents would be available for Members in the future.

The planning applications were noted and no further comments made.

19. EA SECTION 141 STATEMENT 2020 (PRECEPT REPORT)

RECEIVED a copy of the EA Precept Report 2019 and EA Section 141 Statement 2020.

(As attached to these Minutes – Appendix 12)

S Batt said that the Board will notice we are one of the heaviest payers at £427k.

J Lewis said that in the past he had made an observation that our money was being spent on administration costs. He noted that no money had been spent on administration on this report.

The Acting Clerk said that we were doing a pretty good job in getting our money back from the EA whether that be through contribution or PCSA.

The Chairman confirmed that there was a meeting with the EA in 2 weeks' time to discuss utilising EA Funds.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Environmental Issues

The Clerk explained that the Board lacks a champion for environmental issues and at the next meeting he would like a Member to be put forward to become an

environmental champion to work with himself and a biodiversity consultant. He said that we have a responsibility for biodiversity and conservation, and this is high on the list on the IDB1 form that we complete and also high on the list that DEFRA are concerned about.

D Dewar-Whalley suggested that The Clerk send an email round to Members with some further information so that a Member with a particular interest in that field could be considered for this.

The Clerk agreed to send an email to Members with some further information and we can formalise this at the next Board meeting.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Board meeting was confirmed as Monday 23 November at 1pm.

22. CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed and thanked the Board for their attendance.