

MINUTES OF THE 63rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE HELD ON 4th June 2014

Representatives of the following Branch Member Authorities were present:-

Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board
Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board
Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Water Management Board
Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board
Bassetlaw District Council
North Lincolnshire Council
Environment Agency

Guests and Speakers:-

Eddy Allen – Secretary, ADA Northern Branch
Peter Bateson – Honorary Secretary, ADA Lincolnshire Branch
John Dennis – Chairman, ADA Northern Branch
Tim Farr – Chairman, Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Matt Goodall – Operations Manager, Environment Agency, (Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire)
David Hoskins – FCRM Technical Advisor and IDB/EA Liaison, Environment Agency (Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire)
Paul Lockhart – Area Flood Risk Manager, Environment Agency (Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire)
Ian Moodie, Flood Management and Access Adviser, National Farmers Union
Norman Osborne – Chairman, ADA Lincolnshire Branch
Ian Russell – Partnerships Manager, Environment Agency
Dr. Jean Venables, CBE – Chief Executive, Association of Drainage Authorities
Morgan Wray, Team Leader, FCRM, Partnership and Strategic Overview, Environment Agency (Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire)

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed delegates and guests to the 63rd Annual General Meeting and Conference.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Wallace, Ron Allcock, Paul Jones, Andrew McGill and Richard Ward.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on the 5th June 2013

It was proposed by David Payne and seconded by William Staunton that the minutes of the last AGM held on the 5th June 2013, copies of which had been circulated to members, be approved as a true record.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Accounts for the period 1st January 2013 to 31st March 2014

David Sisson, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer presented the Branch Accounts which had been signed and circulated with the agenda. He stated that the accounts represented a 15 month period (1st January 2013 to 31st March 2014) and showed a period end balance of £2,566.14. The main items of expenditure related to the costs of hosting the AGM. As suggested at the AGM in June 2013, the desirable level of balances for the Branch to hold was in excess of £2000.

It was proposed by William Staunton and seconded by Roni Chapman that the Branch Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 be adopted.

6. Adoption of Branch Constitution

The new Branch constitution had been circulated with the agenda after much consideration at the Branch meeting held in February 2014 and was now presented for formal adoption.

It was proposed by Sue Wilkinson and seconded by Andrew Arden that the Branch Constitution be adopted.

Ken Knight made reference to the agenda not being received within the prescribed period of 14 days in advance of the meeting as per the constitution. The Secretary stated that the constitution provides for distribution of the agendas within 14 days to lead officers of the Branch for dissemination to members thereafter. However, it was noted that some members had not received their papers within this time period due to what appeared to be a postal issue.

A discussion ensued about the circulation of agendas and papers electronically and it was agreed to email agendas to lead officers of the Branch but to continue with the circulation of paper copies as well.

7. Confirmation of Branch Officers

Members noted the confirmed Branch Officers.

8. Subscriptions

The Secretary reminded members that at the Branch meeting held earlier in February this year, it was agreed that a Branch subscription for 2014/2015 would not be charged. He further stated that the Branch does have the ability to raise subscriptions if funds need to be replenished, with the amount of the subscriptions being fixed at the AGM. The Secretary suggested a small subscription for all RMAs of the Branch for the ensuing year and it was proposed by David Payne and seconded by William Staunton that the matter be considered fully at the EA/IDB Liaison Meeting on 19th November 2014.

9. Any other business

The Chairman had received a letter of thanks from the former Branch Chairman Ian Fowler who wished the Branch the very best for the future.

The Chairman referred to some additional delegates that were not included on the delegate list on the agenda, these were Roni Chapman (Member Doncaster East IDB), Adrian Black (Chairman of Scunthorpe and Gainsborough WMB), Sue Wilkinson (Member Doncaster East IDB), Ian Russell (Partnerships Manager Environment Agency) and Simon Thackray (Director of Finance Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire WLMB).

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.25am.

10. Association of Drainage Authorities – National Update

10:1 Dr. Jean Venables, CBE – Chief Executive

Jean presented Henry Cator's apologies and informed members that with effect from 1st April 2014, ADA is now incorporated and is a company limited by guarantee. The membership on the new Executive Board has been reduced and as a result, the member representation of the individual branches has been reduced from 2/3 to 1. The Executive Board holds its first meeting in July 2014.

Jean informed members that the Spring Edition of the ADA Gazette had been well received; this issue had covered a timeline of flooding events from October 2013 to February 2014. The leaflets produced by ADA namely, IDBs – an Introduction, The Value of Water Level Management for Electricity Supply, Transportation Network and Economy are being used widely by all IDBs and their members together with Local Authorities and for Public Shows around the Country. ADA are looking at producing two further leaflets, growing food in IDB areas and the Value of Water Level Management to the Environment. Jean asked that IDBs continue to circulate these important leaflets.

After the flooding events of last winter ADA are looking at a future policy for maintenance works on a "reach by reach basis" and JV is liaising with Defra in particular about the justification for having land drainage works carried out on main rivers. Jean went on to say that the flooding that occurred in Somerset was exceptional, although not unique as flooding is occurring in other areas. Jean emphasised the need for increased capacity for flows in main rivers.

On closing, Jean informed members and delegates that she had recently visited the Netherlands as a guest of the Dutch Government to view their approach to flood risk management and water level management.

A reminder to all delegates that the Association's Annual Conference is to be held on 12th November 2014 at the ICE building in London.

Questions

Peter Bateson asked whether all the leaflets produced by ADA are available in electronic format to which Jean replied they are available in pdf format for download from the ADA website.

Tim Farr enquired about Jean's visit to Holland and asked if there was anything significant to report from the visit. Jean stated that the most significant difference between UK and Holland was that in Holland, all of the watercourses (including riparian) have, by statute, to be cleaned out every year and inspected thereafter.

William Staunton was pleased to hear the message that is being sent regarding the need for maintenance works on main rivers and asked whether there had been any response from the Government. Jean stated that whenever the opportunity arises the message is reiterated and that an opportune time will be when the Secretary of State visits the Bedford Group of IDBs in June.

Norman Osborne asked if Holland has an equivalent body to Natural England. Jean responded that they do not, although they are bound by the same legislation as UK.

Eddy Allen stated when IDBs widen channels there were huge financial implications on them to pay compensation to farmers.

Jean further commented on flood banks that had been built on private land but are not maintained by the EA and the question remained who is responsible for these?

11. Environment Agency

11:1 Tidal Trent Surge and Recovery December 2013 - Matt Goodall, Operations Manager

Matt made a presentation highlighting damage caused by the Trent Tidal Surge in December 2013, particular reference was made to the Keadby Defences, Keadby Pumping Station, Burringham and Alkborough areas.

The final slide of the presentation showed the total cost to the Agency for funding the recovery works was £4.197M.

11:2 Environment Agency Structure Changes April 2014 and October 2014 and Capital and Revenue Funding 2015/2016 and beyond - Paul Lockhart, Area Flood Risk Manager

Paul's presentation was in two parts, the first covered the Environment Agency's re-organisation. The National structure had been reduced to a 2 tier structure but it was noted that there had been no changes to the contacts within the Agency for the local IDBs. The 16 areas of the Agency had been renamed and were based on geographical areas. A copy of the area map is available upon request.

The second part of the presentation showed the highlights of the Capital Programme for 2014-2015 which included examples of new projects planned in the Trent area (Derbyshire, Notts and Leicestershire). The total value of the projects for the Trent RFCC was £29.19M. Further slides showed the Local Authority and IDB Projects with continued funding this year for Doncaster East IDB, Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board and Bassetlaw District Council. Members noted that the recovery funding bid for the cost of the repairs following the Tidal Surge event in December 2013 had been successful and IOANNWLMB and Scunthorpe and Gainsborough WMB had been granted £93K.

On closing his presentation Paul informed members that Defra's evaluation of the Partnership Funding Policy had been published and was available on Defra's website. Defra had concluded that the policy should not be changed at this stage although a policy implementation review was planned for 2017.

11:3 Governance of the Isle of Axholme Implementation – Morgan Wray, Team Leader, FCRM, Partnership and Strategic Overview

Morgan read out quotes from various MPs, Henry Cator and Ian Moodie all of which were related to a weight of political expectations in catchment management including how the flood risk in the Isle of Axholme and low lying areas is managed.

He summarised the key points of note for the Isle of Axholme Strategy;

- The EA are looking at the future of Keadby Pumping Station which is 75 years old. Project to commence 2014/2015 on optioneering of requirements.
- Issues at West Stockwith Pumping Station where considerable work is required to update the electrics at the station.
- EA Under maintenance pressures due to not being a land drainage organisation any more in the IOA.
- Water Framework Directive – Need to deliver for environmental also.
- Maintenance Pilot Projects.
- Communications – Do people in the area understand what the EA do?
- Had met with Andrew Percy MP and there is a desire for the IOA Strategy Advisory Group to be reconstituted to deliver actions.
- Strategy is completed and has been signed off by the EA but not by Defra. Now being used as a Working document detailing what needs to be done in the Isle.

In closing, the Chairman thanked Morgan Wray for his presentation and invited questions.

Ian Benn asked if a copy of all the presentations given at the AGM could be circulated to delegates.

Eddy Allen referred to the breach that Matt Goodall showed in his presentation stating that the Ouse and Humber IDB's area is located the other side of the breach and properties still remain flooded. He was concerned that the cost of employing a WEM contractor on this work had cost more than 3 times what a local IDB/contractor would have charged. This was he felt a waste of already stretched public funds. The Secretary suggested that EA's WEM contractors were part of a national procurement arrangement that was not necessarily aimed at carrying out works on a small scale issue. PSCA focuses effort to make certain that the most suitable RMA undertakes work at local level.

11:4 Public Sector Co-operation Agreements (PSCAs) – Ian Russell, Partnerships Manager

The Secretary invited Ian Russell, Partnerships Manager to provide an update to delegates on the recently produced PSCAs. Ian stated that the PSCAs provided an opportunity for Risk Management Authorities (RMA) to share plans for maintenance and to agree who is best placed to deal with works to be undertaken including looking at the resources that are available. The IDBs are generally supportive to enter into a PSCA. Jean Venables commented that under the terms of a PSCA, it is possible for any RMA to carry out works for another RMA.

12. National Farmers Union - Flooding Manifesto – Ian Moodie, Flood Management Advisor

Ian made his presentation on the NFU's Flooding Manifesto – Valuing Agriculture in Flood Management.

He stated that 2,700 hectares of agricultural land had been flooded by the tidal surge in December whilst 48,750 hectares of land was flooded during one week in February 2014 from fluvial sources. The full assessment of the financial cost to the farming industry was not yet known.

Ian informed delegates that DEFRA's Farming Recovery Fund Phase 2 was available for farmers affected by flooding during Winter 2013/2014 and applications should be submitted for this funding by the 27th June 2014.

Ian showed a slide detailing what the NFU wanted to see as a result of the flooding that has affected the agricultural industry. The NFU would like a review of the Government's Flood and Coastal Risk Management Policy and suggested four areas of particular focus for this review which were;

- Recognition of the true value of agriculture and our rural communities,
- Increased funding targeted at maintenance and delivery,
- Easier ways to enable the maintenance of our watercourses and flood defences and,
- Reducing the impacts of urban areas.

In closing, Ian summarised the ongoing work of the NFU which was to continue to make it less bureaucratic for farmers to undertake their own maintenance on main rivers, the EA's LTI Strategy to strike a better balance between capital and revenue and importance of rural communities and agriculture, recognition of the importance of duration and frequency of flooding within a new National Flood Risk Assessment and new Outcome Measures that recognised impact to high grade agricultural land, rural communities and infrastructure.

13. River Idle Management Pilot – Tim Farr, Chair of Project Stakeholder Group

Tim gave his presentation on the planned maintenance pilots for the Trent area which included the River Idle, Bottesford Beck and the River Eau.

He stated there had been some issues with the River Idle being constrained by SSSIs and some complications for the Bottesford Beck with a section around the steelworks which was heavily polluted.

Tim summarised the purpose of the maintenance pilots and some significant issues that had been identified.

Copies of all presentations will be made available to delegates.

14. Questions

The Chairman thanked all the guests for their presentations and invited questions.

Martin Spoor of Doncaster East IDB asked for clarity on the NFU's position relating to PSCAs being a vehicle to undertake works on a main river. He stated that at a recent water level management meeting, concerns had been raised regarding the PSCA as to whether it was legal and could potentially expose Board members should this be challenged. There were some concerns about the advice given regionally by the NFU.

The NFU's national perspective is that they are very supportive of the PSCA arrangement. Jean Venables was curious of any challenges and requested to be kept informed and up to date.

Ian Russell gave an example of a current PSCA where de-silting work was required and the EA did not receive funding for this work. The landowner had agreed to fund the work which was carried out by an IDB.

15. Future dates for note and/or agreement

The Chairman reminded delegates of the following dates for diaries;

ADA Conference 2014 – 12th November 2014 in London

EA/IDB/LA Liaison Meeting – 19th November 2014 (venue to be confirmed)

ADA Trent Branch Meeting – 18th February 2015 (venue to be confirmed and Doncaster East IDB to host)

Trent Branch AGM – 10th June 2015 at Newark Showground.

The Secretary asked for feedback on the format of the next AGM and in particular what was appropriate due to the restraints on the current budget. He reminded delegates that there was no cost to delegates attending the AGM but there was a cost for the luncheon. Any suggestions on the format of the next AGM to be submitted to either the Secretary or the Chairman.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the conference session at 13.10 hours.

During the luncheon that followed, Robert Adam gave Grace and the Chairman thanked all guests, presenters and delegates for their support of a successful and informative event.