

MINUTES of the FORTY THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE
of the RIVER GREAT OUSE BRANCH of the
ASSOCIATION OF DRAINAGE AUTHORITIES

Held at Prickwillow Village Hall, Main Street, Prickwillow on Tuesday 7th March 2023 at 2.00pm

Top Table

Lorna McShane (Minutes)
David Thomas (Branch clerk)
Ian Moodie (ADA)
Marc Heading (Branch Chair)
Tom Pickover (EA – Operations)
Darren Trumper (EA – FCRM)

1. Elections

It was proposed and seconded that Mr Marc Heading be re-elected Chairman of the Branch for the ensuing year.

It was proposed and seconded that Mr Doug McMurdo be re-elected Vice Chairman of the Branch for the ensuing year.

The Members of the Executive Committee were re-confirmed en bloc and are;

H Raby, M Heading, J Fenn, J Brown, W P T Legge, A A D Morbey, D McMurdo, P Hirons, T Matkin, J Heading and B Long as IDB representatives with B Stewart (RFCC) and P Hulme (EA).

2. Minutes of the 42nd AGM held on 1st March 2022

The minutes of the Forty Second Annual Conference held on 1st March 2022 were presented as circulated and approved.

There were no matters arising from the last meeting on 1st March 2022.

3. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman referred to the items which were considered in the morning workshop sessions, which were all of importance to Branch members – Climate change, Drought and Water Management. He also referred to the session by David Johns, Managing Director of Water Resources East (WRE). WRE were working to manage water resources for the East of England, taking into account the needs of all sectors.

WRE first plan had been published in November 2022 for consultation and had received 70 responses which are being considered and a response to these will be published.

Two reservoirs are proposed in the region at Chatteris and Sleaford which allow better transit of water around the area and will be important for future water supply in the region.

Internal Drainage Board contributions are important to the WRE and IDB infrastructure is supporting water transfer in Lincolnshire using various IDB drains for storage. They are also working with the

NFU on water abstraction. WRE would like to know how it can support water abstraction and flood risk management and are looking at that the two proposed reservoirs can deliver for all users.

David Thomas expressed concern about the delivery role of IDB's in Regional Strategy documents.

Six national plans were proposed but WRE was the only plan published and was being used as a template nationally and being used as a model for multi-sector planning and delivery, but a concern is where does funding come from. The WRE greatly values the funding from IDB's.

4. Report from ADA

Ian Moodie reported that it has been a very busy year for the organisation and going forward a very busy year. Defra have provided funding for the Environmental Good Governance Guide published in October and these were available from Clerks of the IDBs or ADA.

Carbon Budgeting was another live issue for ADA and what this means for IDBs. Many are actively working towards carbon net zero. The carbon emitted from Electric and Diesel pumps was being conducted to give a baseline which will help to demonstrate how Boards are making improvements.

IDBs were being impacted by rising costs of electricity, insurance and materials and were concerned about Council tax capping. These concerns were being raised by Councils. Michael Gove raised this issue in Parliament when Council settlements were being considered. Emergency events were being considered and the need to look at the wider issues of flooding events and finding a route for funding these events.

The Environment Act 2020 had introduced some rating reform for IDBs and will enable new IDBs to be created. Defra will be consulting on this and how IDBs can opt into using it.

Schedule 3 Flood & Water Management Act 2010

Following a review Defra have finally announced in January 2023 the Government's decision to implement schedule 3 which will provide a framework for the approval and adoption of SUDs and this will occur at a yet to be determined date. The SUDs Approval Authority is to be the Lead Local Flood Authority for the area. One of the main challenges to this will be lack of expertise and resources within the Authorities and this will need to be addressed by LLFA.

ADA Chairman Robert Caudwell has chaired Lowland Agricultural Peat Taskforce set up by Defra. Its goal is to extend the useable life of lowland agricultural peatlands to slow the loss of soil carbon and support profitable agriculture and Defra are looking at funding for pilot projects to deliver projects by Internal Drainage Boards to install new small scale water level management infrastructure within drainage districts containing lowland peat.

ADA Finances

There was a deficit this year of £25,000. ADA had not raised subscriptions in recent years but cannot continue to do this. The Board will need to balance its books, increase subscriptions and make savings.

ADA Events

1. Flood & Water Live 2023 5-6th July at Carrington, Lincolnshire which water provide practical demonstrations of machinery in action and a number of other exhibition stands.
2. Environment Day at Thorney Peterborough – this event had been very well attended.

3. NFU/EA Event – Keeping Rivers Flowing was to be held at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.

5. Considerations of future arrangements for running the Branch

The Middle Level Commissioners took on the role of Branch clerk a number of years ago from the Ely Group. Discussions had been held to propose to transfer the role to the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards. David Thomas was thanked for his service as clerk ahead of his retirement from the Middle Level Commissioners.

The Branch supported its administration transferring during 2023/24 ahead of its 2024 AGM.

Phil Camamile will take on the role of Branch clerk on behalf of the Bedford Group. Middle Level Commissioners will finalise accounts and transfer files ahead of the 2024 AGM.

As part of the transfer the Branch passed the resolution to change the signatories on the branch Barclay's account, with signatories confirmed as M Heading, D McMurdo and P Camamile, and that the special signing rights attached to the bank mandate are for any 2 of the 3 signatories to sign.

6. Great Ouse Branch appointee to the ADA Board

I Moodie reported that the Branch's appointee to the ADA Board, J Heading would soon be reaching the end of his term and was thanked for his loyal service. He reported that it was at the Branch's discretion who and how they nominate a replacement.

The Branch resolved that the Middle Level Commissioners as clerk email the IDB groups seeking nominations for a suitable replacement for J Heading and that those nominations to be considered by the Chairman in consultation with the Executive Committee. The Chairman and Executive Committee are authorised to select and notify ADA of the new Board member.

7. Receive Report from the Environment Agency

T Pickover and D Trumper from the Environment Agency were attending their first Branch meeting and introduced themselves to the meeting. Tom Pickover is the new Operations Manager (Lower Gr Ouse) and Darren Trumper is a Team Leader in FCRM here on behalf of P Hulme.

T Pickover stated that recruitment is a major issue for the EA currently. This was a situation which was mirrored across the industry. Engagement with communities is a large part of this new role with the EA and thought the emphasise should be on the EA to contact IDBs to have an open conversation about IDB Precept and how it is spent. The Chairman has requested consultation on works programmes and the use of IDB Precept. This commitment had been made and should continue.

A question was asked about the condition of the Hundred Foot River and whether any work is scheduled for this, with concerns that the river has reduced capacity along the system. A comment was made about the A14 improvements and runoff rates and the inability of the system to carry the runoff water.

A question was asked about the condition of the River Great Ouse and whether there were any plans for dredging of the river. It was explained that evidence was needed to show the benefits of dredging and that it will increase capacity.

There was currently a £2 million gap in revenue funding for maintenance and currently it was easier to get funding for capital works.

The Chairman thanked the EA for their contribution and attendance of their meeting.

8. Approval of Branch Accounts

It was proposed and seconded that the accounts of the Branch be accepted and approved by Members, as presented and circulated.

9. Forthcoming Branch Subscriptions 2023/24

It was recommended that there be no change to the subscription this year as there were sufficient resources in the budget to reflect the workload of the Branch.

It was proposed and approved to continue the retainer payable to the Middle Level Commissioners at £850 for the Branch clerking/administration.

13. Date of next Meeting

Tuesday 5th March 2024 – Venue to be advised

14. Any Other Business

The Chairman thanked David Thomas for his contribution to the Branch and wished him best wishes for the future and encouraged him to keep involved with ADA.