

## Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) Lincolnshire Branch

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held via MS Teams on Thursday, 20th May 2021 at 1.30 p.m.

### In Attendance:

Black Sluice IDB	Mr K.C. Casswell	Chairman
	Mr I. Warsap	Chief Executive
	Mr D. Withnall	Finance Officer
Lindsey Marsh DB	Mr G. Crust	Chairman
	Mr T. Aldridge	Member
	Mr A. McGill	Chief Executive
North Level IDB	Mr M.H.S. Sly	Chairman
	Mr P. Sharman	Chief Executive
	Mr J. Stubley	Operations Engineer
Welland and Deepings IDB	Mr T. Purlant	Chairman
	Mrs K. Daft	Chief Executive
Witham and Humber IDBs	Mrs J. Froggatt	Chief Executive
	Mr M. Shilling	Director of Operations and Engineering
Witham Fourth DIDB	Mr P. Richardson	Chairman
	Mr P. Bedford	Member
	Mr P. Bateson	Chief Executive
ADA	Mr I. Moodie	Technical Manager
Lincolnshire County Council	Mr D. Hickman	Head of Environment
	Mr M. Harrison	Senior Commissioning Officer Flood Risk
Environment Agency	Mr P. Reilly	Operations Manager

### 1. Election of Chairman

Members reaffirmed the appointment of Mr P. Richardson as Chairman of the Branch.

### 2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P. Gilbert (Chairman of Witham First DIDB), Mr M. Wray (FCRM Manager, EA), Mr R. Caudwell (Chairman, ADA) and Mr I. Thompson (Chief Executive, ADA).

### 3. Election of Honorary Secretary

Members reaffirmed the appoint of Mr A. McGill as Secretary of the Branch.

### 4. Chairman's Announcements

None.

### 5. Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 21st October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 6. Matters Arising

None.

### 7. Reports from ADA National

## **General Update**

Mr I. Moodie presented the following updates:

- Red diesel - Treasury had not changed its position, holding firm that IDBs would not be included on the list of businesses that would continue to use red diesel when the change in legislation came into force in April 2022. Certain boards would be affected more than others, e.g. those operating larger diesel pumping stations and those with their own workforce and plant fleet. The additional cost was expected to be in the region of 6/7% of turnover for the larger boards. ADA had made significant efforts to encourage Government to move on this and had provided considerable evidence to support their case, however, the Government position remained firm. Hydrogenated vegetable oil, as a biofuel, may be an option to consider in the future should tax exemptions apply as, potentially, it exhibited carbon and emission improvements; this too would require further lobbying and modifications to equipment. It was considered important to inform the special levy payers of the potential increased costs from moving from red to white diesel and to seek their support with lobbying. ADA continued to pursue these matters on behalf of IDBs.
- Standing Orders - the Model Orders had been amended to enable flexibility for remote Board meetings to be held in the future if necessary; the orders had been circulated to individual boards for adoption.
- Byelaws - ongoing. These had effectively been signed off with DEFRA after some changes but formal approval was awaited. Application of drainage works had been applied across all the byelaws.
- Health, Safety and Welfare - Three Awareness Modules were now complete alerting members to their responsibility around effective leadership and managing risk and were available on the ADA web site. A further three would be developed later in the year. Feedback was welcomed.
- Good Governance Guides - A DRAFT Environmental Guide had been prepared for consideration by the Technical and Environmental Committee, the document had already been shared with DEFRA. The document was extremely detailed but it was planned to condense this into a simple but concise publication to be released in the autumn.
- Demonstration - A working demonstration was planned for June/July 2022. A Demo Advisory Group had viewed sites in the Doncaster/South Yorkshire area but these had been discounted due to accessibility and sites in East Anglia were now being investigated.
- Keeping Our Rivers Flowing Summit - Arranged by ADA and the Countryside Landowners Association, to be held via MS Teams on 24th June 2021. Speakers Caroline Douglas EA Executive Director for Flood Risk Director and Georgina Collins, Director for Flood and Water at DEFRA. Case studies would be shared and this would be used as a platform for lobbying for watercourse maintenance.
- Future Fens Strategy - This may be useful to support the strategy work on the Witham Catchment, looking at strategic assets and potential for storage. Working with Area Flood Risk Manager in the Great Ouse catchment on future fens strategy looking at costings for all of the assets

and systems for flood risk management, DRAFT Baseline Report prepared and published last week and will be available on ADA website. ADA happy to facilitate use of this for other catchment projects in the future, hopeful it will engender closer working between authorities.

### **Technical and Environmental Committee**

Mr I. Moodie gave the following update on workstreams:

- Update for template BAP released in November/December together with guidance, this will be useful when the Water Environment Bill comes into force.
- Final piece of work around biodiversity metrics being completed to able ADA to report nationally on what IDBs were delivering, to elevate this important and positive work going on to DEFRA, giving them the confidence in what IDBs are doing. Envisaged that this will be a requirement by Government in the future to demonstrate good governance.
- New workstream underway on climate and carbon, feeding in part to the EA's FRM Action Plan published last week, this has three strands:
  1. Carbon calculator for IDBs to baseline and demo carbon energy reduction over time (not about doing less about doing what we do now as efficiently as possible).
  2. Guide to carbon reduction in pumped catchments - Involved with EA MICA Team looking at pumping stations and carbon savings that could be realised there, speaking to colleagues in Germany and the Netherlands there are a lot options to consider. This should be ready for publication in summer 2022 and may be launched at the Demo event.
  3. Adaptation Reporting power for authorities - ADA had been asked by DEFRA to do this on behalf of IDBs, reporting on how IDBs were adapting and planned to adapt to the perceived threats. The lack of reporting was criticised by Climate Change Commission or National Audit Office as well as some of the environment charities. Looking at 2023.

Mr A. McGill asked for an idea of changes that had been suggested to reduce the carbon footprint, stating that some boards had major schemes planned in the near future and should be aware so that, if necessary, they could incorporate these. Mr I. Moodie stated that ideas included system efficiency (merging stations), storage areas (as large amounts of energy was used to turn on the pumps, increasing the amount of storage could enable the pumps to be switched on less frequently), the use of more efficient motors (with permanent magnets rather than induction), and variable speed motors rather than fixed speed for greater flexibility, etc.

Mr K. Casswell expressed concern about the capital cost required to meet these requirements and hoped DEFRA and the EA would take this on board. He stated that 2025 was not far away and the work could cost billions, this must be realistic. He asked ADA to make this clear to the EA and DEFRA. In response, Mr I. Moodie confirmed that ADA had met with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and had made this point. This was taken on board and the point was made by ADA that the FDGiA did not include strands to factor in costs of improvements in respect of carbon neutrality. ADA would continue to push this and did have representation on the

Research and Development Board for DEFRA and the EA. The focus was on reduction for IDBs and it was suggested that boards consider the quick and easy wins now (eg use of HVO and managing the efficiency of the systems) and plan any major costs into their longer-term plans.

Mr G. Crust enquired whether increasing carbon capture in the soils by raising water levels and flooding the fens was one of the considerations and noted his concern about this. In response, Mr Moodie reported that both he and Mr R. Caudwell were members of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force, and some members had shown an interest in Polludiculture (growing crops in water). However, in terms of carbon loss and climate change gas loss from peat, he reported that there was a compelling science for raising water levels beneath the soil to retain the carbon and the gasses within it, but this was effectively cancelled out by methane emissions within about half a metre of the land surface, at which point the methane production exceeded the emissions saving. The Task Force was about preserving soil loss, rewetting the subsurface and in part raising water levels, but in a sustainable way that wasn't seeking to force agricultural production off the land. There was an implicit understanding that food production was a high priority for the fens, that said, there would be places where nature reserves would preserve this. There was some conflict as pumping few times but for longer required a greater flux in water levels whereas the group was looking at more stable water levels. He stated that creating linear storage capacity and other storage options would be critical.

### ***Policy and Finance Committee***

Mr P. Bateson gave the following update:

- The February meeting had discussed land drainage consents and that DEFRA required more information on costs so they could allow IDBs to increase consent fees from £50. There had been overwhelming support for this from IDBs and information had been passed to DEFRA with an update expected from them in June.
- The meeting had received an update from the EA on the Environment Bill which had recently been updated by DEFRA.
- There was an announcement in Spring regarding the Innovation Project and expressions of interest were submitted with Lincolnshire being successful for the Lincolnshire combined Groundwater Project.
- Seats were coming up on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee later this year. Anyone interested was encouraged to put their name forward for consideration.
- The National Action Plan which sat alongside the National Strategy was discussed and IDBs were encouraged to take part in a questionnaire from the EA; this had been circulated. The precept was also being reviewed and engagement and representation was required with £2.2m being spent collectively in Lincolnshire. This was linked to work on highland water contributions and ADA had commented and raised concerns on the DRAFT, a meeting was due to be held shortly. More than £5m was being spent on PSCA work in Lincolnshire so consolidating this 'money go round' would be beneficial.
- Committee workstreams included school engagement, IDB byelaws and climate change. An updated practitioners' guide been released and should be used by IDBs for this year's audit.

### ***Events Committee***

The Committee was due to meet on 16th June and representatives were encouraged to speak to their respective boards for feedback on attendance at post covid events. Anyone requiring an invitation, to contact Lindsey Marsh.

### ***Pay and Conditions Committee***

Not held since last year, members were asked to raise any points with Mr D. Withnall who would take these to the next meeting.

### ***Environment Committee***

Nothing to report.

## **9. Accounts for the Period up to 31st January 2021**

Mr P. Bateson presented the attached audited accounts which showed a balance at 31st of January of £23,516. Income included £4,000 for subscriptions and £350 for copies of the White Book which had been sold to nine other boards. There had been no expenditure on meetings, or for Show costs and only a nominal sum for secretarial costs and the laptop had been upgraded (this was used at emergency control during flood events).

Mr K. Casswell proposed approval of the accounts and this was seconded by Mr G. Crust.

These were approved.

## **10. Branch Subscriptions**

Bearing in mind the balance in the account and the limited expenditure expected this year due to Covid-19 restrictions and the lack of physical meetings, Mr P. Bateson suggested that subscriptions for 2021 should be zero. There would be no Lincolnshire Show Costs this year but the Chairman reported that, should restrictions be eased, the Branch may attend a small event at the Showground 'Lincs Fest' in August, the cost of which would not exceed £1,000.

Mr P. Bateson proposed and Mr G. Crust seconded that subscriptions be suspended this year.

It was agreed that there would be no subscriptions this year.

## **11. Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership**

Mr D. Hickman updated as follows:

- The bid submitted for Innovation and Resilience Funding in respect of Managing Ground Water had been one of the 25 successful bids across the country (79 submitted). A total of £7.5m had been allocated over a six-year periods. The project which focussed on managing ground water across the spectrum, would extend our ability to look at where we had issues with groundwater in relation to chalk aquifers across the County and would enable us to explore how we could work with North Lincolnshire as well. This would involve working closely with the Chalk Streams Project in the Wolds and looking at resilience as well as water levels. This issue had not yet been considered at a national level so would be very useful. An email would be sent regarding the initial process of developing the project with support from DEFRA. A Readiness Assessment was underway to enable all views to be aligned before the project commenced and this would ensure that everything was in place to take it forward. The timescales showed the FCRM form being submitted at the end of June and the Outline Business

Case in December-February, however, work was progressing well and he was expecting this to stage to be completed by the end of 2021 to enable delivery to commence in early 2022. LCC would be working with IDBs directly and would keep ADA informed at Branch and National level.

- Regarding enforcement and consenting, LCC had a long and successful relationship with the IDBs in terms of discharging land drainage duties. There had been a lot of interest recently from members in working closer with riparian landowners and raising awareness, improving transparency and publicising the work we are doing in the area. The Memorandum of Understanding had been renewed for a further year and the Partnership would be looking at monitoring and how we manage this going forward, sharing examples of successful work to demonstrate the success of the Partnership over coming year.
- The recent election in LCC had resulted in some changes of seats and the new set of Portfolio holders would be formally confirmed at the end of the month but there was no expected change in terms of Flood Risk. Flood risk would be brought more in line with broader environment matters and planning.

Mr M. Harrison thanked IDBs for their support in pulling the Common Works Programme together. this was the element of the strategy where we publicised the partnership schemes capturing those that fell below the grant in aid and local levy threshold, many local beneficial schemes were now included - a good example of partnership working in Lincolnshire.

## 12. EA Update

Mr P. Riley reported on the following:

- There were now three operations managers – Lee Edling (Welland and Nene), Kate Halker (Humber and East Coast) and Pete Riley (recovery Witham catchment). They continued to renew and build relationships within the partnership.
- Although the capital position was very healthy, the EA was feeling the pressure on revenue spending and were working hard to maximise opportunities to be flexible around these areas. Recovery work following the flooding the winter before last was nearly completed at a cost to date of £40m against a budget of £50m.
- As discussed at the last meeting, there had been lots of traffic on social media around 'no mow may' with a push from environmental organisations to do exactly that. The EA was taking the opportunity to educate people about why the work was important, particularly around defences and an article had also been included in the Spring ADA gazette showing what best practice looked like and why the work of IDBs was important.
- The EA Covid guidance was still to work from home where possible and this would be the message for the remainder of the calendar year for office-based staff; field teams were carrying on as usual. There had been some concern about the impact of this on the work but not a day had been missed on site. Regarding productivity, there was always concern about the quality of work with contractors that they did not have a close relationship with, but partnership working with framework contractors had been a revelation in terms of relying on their ability to do high quality work at a reasonable cost.
- The Witham Strategy was a long-term look at the lower Witham especially in terms of how flood risk would continue to be managed and it would take about

three years to conduct the review. An interim position was needed locally following the pressure of some wet winters and the dry summers which had had a great impact on the assets and a small group had been set up locally to see how to make the best of the existing assets. The EA was working with IDBs to achieve this before the Witham Strategy confirmed the long-term solution.

Mr P. Bateson expressed his disappointment that, following flooding incidents south of Lincoln, where a suitable flood plain had been identified it was turned down as not being suitable. He questioned the decision. Mrs J. Froggatt elaborated, stating that it was difficult finding four suitable offline storage areas and that seemed an ideal site. She reported that it was not very often that a suitable area came up for sale, and this was a 103 acre site was owned by LCC, located right next to Timberland Pumping Station which was due to be upgraded, and had seemed ideal. However, she understood that the land estimated at around £800/850k had been allocated in the capital receipt by LCC in 2021/22 so they did not want it to be held up bearing in mind investigations to confirm its suitability could take two to three years. Mrs Froggatt emphasised the need for partners to align and take advantage of any such opportunities. Mr P. Riley stated that five sites had been identified in the last Strategy and the cost-benefit analysis did not stack up for this parcel of land and it had to be let go.

It was reported there had been a very sad incident, resulting in a fatality in the Thames area where an EA operative undertaking tree work had been crushed and killed when the tree he was working on had fallen. An internal review had been carried out on this and all other hazardous work and had further resulted in a review of all work carried out in the field. There may be an impact on productivity if additional training was required and other measures needed to be put in place although this was positive if health and safety was improved.

### 13. Any Other Business

None.

CHAIRMAN

