

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – EAST MIDLANDS AREA IDB LIAISON MEETING 2018

NOTES OF MEETING

VENUE: Cockliffe House, Burntstump Country Park, Burntstump Hill, Nottingham, NG5 8PQ.

DATE: Thursday 6th December 2018

CHAIRMAN: Vij Randeniya – Chair, Trent RFCC

1. Welcome and Introductions

Louise Cresswell welcomed delegates on behalf of the Environment Agency who were hosting the meeting, citing the excellent partnership working that had developed in the region as proof, regular dialogue such as today's meeting greatly enhanced efficient service delivery.

Vij Randeniya, Chairman of Trent RFCC chaired the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Malcolm Harris, Paul Lockhart, Chris McGuinness, Peter Horne and Kelly Golds.

3. General EA/RFCC Matters – Morgan Wray

Morgan presented updates on a number of new initiatives and changes to procedures and delivery of common interest. These included:-

- Next Generation Supplier Arrangements (NGSA), a new organisation within the EA that replaces Programme Delivery Units (PDUs) and the WEM. Primary aim was to facilitate collective delivery of projects.

The new arrangements were available to other Risk Management Authorities (RMA) who could access the service through their local PSO team.

Robert Caudwell, Chairman of Association of Drainage Authorities welcomed the new arrangements and also stated that PSCAs were a vehicle for delivering capital works as well as maintenance operations. Robert gave Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board's works to rebuild a section of Wash Banks, near Boston as a prime example.

Robert also felt that more flexibility on who leads projects would be beneficial and a review of approach/process to keep it commensurate with the type and size of projects may also assist efficient delivery.

Louise responded advising that the level of scrutiny of projects was set by DEFRA so there are constraints on what the EA can/cannot do in this respect but the EA were considering this at a national level.

- Current Six Year Programme progress and next epoch

Morgan stated that the current programme had focussed on risk reduction to properties but it was expected that the next six year programme would focus on a wider basket of receptors/beneficiaries including agricultural land and production.

Of the 300,000 plus homes to be better protected in the current programme nationally over 100,000 were reliant on RMA led projects.

- 25 Year Environment Plan

Morgan advised a new 25 year plan to improve our environment had very recently been launched by UK Government. Detail on exactly how it would impact Flood Risk Management / Water Level Management was yet to be understood.

The secretary enquired if the new requirement of “net gain” rather than “no net loss” of biodiversity being required of developers would be extended to Risk Management Authorities. Clearly any new burdens or requirements or RMAs would need to be funded and project costs could rise, this was a concern. Louise thought that this principle would be applied across flood risk management but details of how/if it would be funded centrally were unavailable at present.

Andrew McGill felt that imaginative use of the Agri-Environmental schemes within the new plan could be of benefit to RMAs’ operational delivery.

- Winter Preparedness

In closing, Morgan advised on the EA’s activity to prepare for the winter flood and emergency season.

4. Isle of Axholme Flood Risk Strategy (IOA FRS) / Keadby Update – Andy Haigh and Emily Mayle

On Keadby Pumping Station, Andy and Emily were pleased to announce that the Keadby Terminally Assisted Outfall (Keadby PS) project had received Outline Business Case approval in September. The Full Business Case had subsequently been submitted.

Contracts were currently being agreed, and construction works were now expected to commence in 2019.

All present welcomed the project approval.

On delivery of the wider IOA FRS, Andy and Emily reported on the work of the Asset Management and Delivery Group including:-

- Asset Grouping
- RMA future capital investment plan alignment
- Understanding future development and growth plans
- Understanding the benefits from surface water and sewer flooding reductions
- Investigating future responsibilities (who does what?)
- Potential for asset rationalisations

All agreed this work although complex had true potential to deliver a cost efficient sustainable service for the future.

Emily went on to give an update on the work/progress of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy review which after the boundary was extended, now included the tidal Trent up to Gainsborough.

Emily advised that 6 options for future management had recently been selected for further investigation:-

- (a) Do nothing
- (b) Do minimum
- (c) Status Quo
- (d) Keeping out (barriers)
- (e) Containing (flood defences)
- (f) Accommodating (formal flood storage areas)

Current thinking indicated that this suite of options could be used individually or in combinations and that options for management could change during the 100 year strategy life-span.

All delegates agreed that it would be beneficial to invite a representative of the Humber Team to address and update at a future branch meeting.

5. De-maining, Lessons Learnt – Becky Stewart

Becky Stewart shared some of the headline lessons learnt from the Snow Sewer Pilot in our region including:-

- Flood Risk Management industry needed a mechanism for transferring assets as none currently existed. It does in other public service areas such as highways.
- Lack of a mechanism resulted in the transfer process being akin to a commercial transaction.
- Current national model transfer agreement was considered too heavily weighted towards protecting the EA's interests and as such a burdensome on the receiving RMA. Some felt it went against the principle of local partnership working.
- De-maining process exposes the transferee to risk as the process is not time limited, especially if the de-mainment order is challenged by way of appeals being submitted.
- National protocol requirements somewhat adversely impacted local wishes to rationalise our systems.
- Funding of future tranches of de-mainment and transfers needed to be agreed i.e. via commuted sums, precept reductions etc.

Becky Stewart also introduced the Rivers Torne and Idle Catchment Abstraction Pilot that she would be local lead on. This would be formally launched in the new year.

6. Update on maintenance, revenue works and Public Sector Co-operation Agreements (PSCAs) – Carl Wharmby and Fran Brownhill

Carl Wharmby commenced the presentation by reminding delegates that the PSCA between the EA and Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board was the first in the UK and as such, an exemplar for others to learn from.

Carl advised that the EA's revenue (and capital) programmes would be shared in the next two months.

Fran Brownhill then went through a series of slides showing PSCA working in most IDB and Local Authority areas in East Midlands which included:-

Doncaster East IDB for EA – Diggin Dyke, Low Bank, Candy Farm, Tunnel Pits, New Zealand, Torne and North Soak.

Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board for EA – South Level Engine Drain and River Idle.

North Lincolnshire Council for EA – Burringham, River Trent.

Scunthorpe and Gainsborough Water Management Board for EA – River Eau and Great Catchwater

Trent Valley IDB for EA – Routine and intermittent maintenance and incident response.

EA on behalf of IDBS – Whitgift Outfall de-silting

Finally, in this section, Fran advised that a new form of agreement was now available and would be used when current agreements were to be renewed.

7. ADA National Updates

Robert Caudwell presented updates highlighting activities being addressed by the ADA National team. These included:-

- Probable collaboration with Association of Suds Authorities (ASA), ADA were to provide administration services for the new organisation.
- Water Resources East – An initiative to review water shortages in south eastern England, centred on a pilot in South Lincolnshire (Black Sluice IDB).
- Water Transfer Licencing.
- IDB Rating Reforms.
- Health and Safety.

Robert concluded with the recent launch of the “IDB Good Governance Guide” at the ADA Conference in November and reminded delegates of a series of workshops being run for IDB Board members and Clerks. In particular, Robert drew attention to the workshops:-

- Doncaster Knights Rugby Football Club on 20th March 2019.
- CIWEM, London on 3rd April 2019 (primarily aimed at Clerks).

The full guide is available in hard copy or for download from the ADA website.

8. ADA Trent Branch – Adoption of minutes of the 67th AGM held on the 7th June 2018

The minutes were unanimously approved and signed off by the meeting Chairman.

9. Date of future meetings

Branch meeting to be hosted by Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board at Kelham House Country Manor Hotel on 14th February 2019.

68th Annual General Meeting and Conference on 6th June 2019 (venue to be announced but in south of area).

10. Branch Announcements

The Secretary announced that both the Chairman Malcolm Harris and himself had come to the end of their terms of office and would be standing down at the 2019 AGM.

Nomination papers would be sent prior to the AGM.

In closing, the Chairman thanked all delegates for their input to a very positive and productive meeting.

In the absence of the Branch Chairman, the Secretary thanked the EA for hosting the event.

The meeting closed at 13.45pm.