

Association of Drainage Authorities Trent Branch

Minutes of the 72nd Annual General Meeting held at 10.30 a.m. on 12th June 2024 at Bawtry Hall.

Members Present:

ADA	Mr I. Thomson	Chief Executive
Doncaster East IDB	Mr C. McGuinness	Chairman
	Mr P. Horne	Vice-Chairman
	Mr M. Brooke	Member
Environment Agency	Mrs L. Cresswell	Area Director (East Midlands)
	Mr G. Oakes	Operations Manager (North)
	Mr N. Sutton	Senior Specialist (North) and IDB Liaison Officer
	Mr R. Cooper	Partnerships and Strategic Overview Team Leader - Notts and Tidal Trent
Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire WLMB	Mr M. Wagstaff	Member
	Cllr Mrs J. Kennedy	Member
Scunthorpe and Gainsborough WLMB	Cllr N. Poole	Chairman
	Cllr R. Ogg	Vice-Chairman
	Mr C. Benson	Clerk
	Mr D. Blake	Financial Officer
Trent Valley IDB	Mr J. Miller	Chairman
	Mr T.H. Farr	Vice-Chairman
	Mr A. Arden	Member
	Mr W.J. Staunton	Member (and Branch Chairman)
Water Management Consortium	Mrs C.B. Davies	Corporate Services Manager

In Attendance:

National Farmers' Union (NFU)	Mrs E. Wood	Land Use and Environment Advisor (Midlands)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Mr J. Harris	Site Manager (Langford Lowfields and Beckingham Marshes)

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Mrs E. Wood from the National Farmers' Union who would be giving a presentation after the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Nottinghamshire County Council, Mr V. Randeniya (RFCC), Mr R. Adam, P. Cornish, J. Coggon and M.A. Harris (Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire WLMB), Cllrs Mrs. S. Shaw and J. Billin (Trent Valley IDB), and Mr A. McGill (Branch Secretary).

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Mr W.J. Staunton was elected for a further three-year term in 2022 and it was agreed that he would continue in the role as Chairman of the Branch.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mr J. Coggon was elected for a further three-year term in 2022 and it was agreed that he would continue in the role as Vice-Chairman.

5. ELECTION OF HONORARY SECRETARY/TREASURER

Mr A. McGill and Mrs C. Davies were elected for a further three-year term in 2022 and it was agreed that they would continue.

6. ELECTION OF ADA EXECUTIVE BOARD DIRECTOR

Mr W.J. Staunton's second three-year term expired in 2024. Mr I. Thomson confirmed that directors could remain in post for three terms and it was therefore agreed that Mr W.J. Staunton would continue in the role for a further term. Mr Staunton reminded members to let him know if there was anything they wished him to raise at the ADA Board meetings.

7. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

Mr D. Blake had audited the accounts up to 31st March 2024 and it was agreed that he would continue as auditor for a further year.

8. MINUTES OF THE 71ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 14TH JUNE 2023

The minutes of the AGM had been confirmed as a correct record and approved at the November meeting.

9. MINUTES OF THE BRANCH MEETING HELD ON 15TH NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the above Branch meeting were confirmed as a correct record and approved.

10. MATTERS ARISING

None.

11. ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST MARCH 2024

The attached accounts had been audited.

It was noted that £1,477.64 remained in the account after deduction of £1,350 in respect of today's meeting. Subscriptions of £180 remained outstanding from North Lincolnshire Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.

The attached accounts were approved and would be signed after the meeting.

12. MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions for 2023 were £45 per organisation.

As there were sufficient funds in the account and no reason to build balances further, members agreed to waive subscriptions for 2024.

13. UPDATE FROM ADA NATIONAL

Mr I. Thomson gave the following updates:

- Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Project Moving forward well and DEFRA pleased with progress.
- Flood Recovery Funding IDBs welcomed the £75M Government funding for storm recovery (Tranche 1) and asset improvements (Tranche 2). Applications had to be submitted by 7th June (Tranche 1) and 28th June (Tranche 2). ADA was hopeful that allocation of funds would be confirmed by the end of July as all work needed to be completed by 31st March 2025; a very tall order.

- ADA Manifesto Refer to ADA Gazette article (attached).
- Local Government Association Special Interest Group (SIG) ADA was playing an active role with the focus on special levy payments. Consideration was being given to separating local funding as, for example in the Boston Borough Council area, the special levy accounted for around 60% of their rates income and the rate cap meant increases were restricted to 4.99% (the IDB special levy had increased by 25% last year). This meant they needed to fund the difference either from reserves or from savings in other service areas. ADA would make sure there were no unintended consequences to any changes. This would need to be picked up with the new administration after the July election. In response to Mr W.J. Staunton, Mr Thomson confirmed that the proposal was to remove the special levy from the capping system but civil servants were concerned that if they did this for the IDBs they would have to consider for other services. Mr C. Benson stated that the councils used to be reimbursed 85% of the special levy from central Government and if reintroduced this would address the issue. Mr I. Thomson confirmed that support grant for IDB special levies had been suggested. Mr C. McGuinness was concerned that, if the special levy was removed from the cap, and a Board needed additional funding, they may be told that they had the mechanism for raising funds locally. Mr Thomson confirmed that the SIG was aware of this and considering the implications. Eighty M.P.s had been invited to the meeting as well as two Ministers and the Secretary of State. Councils were being encouraged to join if they were not already involved. Discussions were now taking place with DEFRA and DLUHC.
- Land Valuation Statutory Instrument (SI) Mr Thomson thanked Mr C. Benson for his help on this. Comments on the DRAFT SI consultation in March were positive with very little negative feedback which meant that DEFRA could now go through the affirmation process in Parliament (through upper and lower houses) for sign off. This document would be fundamental for demaining outside an IDB district, creating new IDBs and would assist with local decisions. Mr M. Brooke referred to land in the DE area (formerly prison land which had been sold off and was now in private ownership). ADA offered assistance with this if needed. Mr C. Benson stated that the Bill could be used to include some of these high spots which were not currently in IDB areas. ADA was also keen to see a slight tweak to the Land Drainage Act to reflect managing water as a resource, e.g. 'water level management' rather than 'land drainage'; this would also require a change to the Water Resources Act (WRA). Mrs L. Cresswell referred to the WRA and closed catchments etc., she had brought this up with Mr S. Berkley and would continue to push this.
- Electricity Standing Charges The Chairman of OFGEM had recognised there was an anomaly for IDBs but had provided no detail.
- Drainage Rating System (DRS) A Technical Governance Group had been set up to consider options for a new system. ADA was supporting an option for IDBs to make use of a Microsoft 365 platform for DRS developed and managed by the Water Management Alliance (WMA) and currently being tested alongside the existing system. IDBs did have the option to consider other systems. Funding may be available to help IDBs transfer data onto a new system.
- ADA Documentary about IDBs This was available for download from the ADA website and members were encouraged to promote their activities locally.
- Audit ADA had recently met with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to discuss audit thresholds. A further meeting would be held post-election to go into technical detail. ADA was also working with the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) (an independent, not for profit,

limited company established to procure external audit services and appoint external auditors for smaller authorities where their gross annual income or expenditure did not exceed £6.5 million).

- All Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Flood and Drought Management (APPG) A meeting had been held in May in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) covering the importance of joined-up flood and drought management. It was unclear whether the APPG would continue under the new Government.
- ADA Committees The first meeting of the new Policy Committee took place on 22nd May and the Advisory Committee on 11th June.
- ADA Collaboration with the Association of SuDS Authorities Work was underway on a joint business plan which would be put to members for comment with view to the two organisations working together as one; likely timescale 12-18 months. Mr C. McGuinness queried the SUDS Association links to planning and whether they would be considering making IDBs statutory consultees or working closer together as it was vital that surface water drainage and flood risk were considered by planning officers at an early stage. Mr I. Thomson confirmed that they would be using their experience in planning to see how this could be improved, and he would stress the importance of engaging with IDBs regarding flood risk management. He hoped to bring something back in 18 months' time.
- ADA Good Governance Guide The updated second edition was due to be published in the summer.

The Chairman welcomed Mr J. Harris (RSPB) to the meeting.

14. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Mr G. Oakes stated that due to the election, there would be no discussion regarding policy and funding but he would answer any questions he could.

EA Officers gave a National Update (slide 2) and an overview of the impact of the Winter Storms (slides 3-13).

This area was within the 'eye of the storm' and Mrs L. Cresswell stated that the number of properties flooded was double what was recorded across the whole country and evidenced the extent of the affect in the east midlands. It was noted that the figures shown for Retford and Wiseton had increased since the slides were prepared. The increase in workload due to the number of FOI requests and MPs letters etc. on top of an already busy programme was stretching resources across all flood risk management authorities. Allocation of flood recovery funding would help authorities to cover some of the additional repair costs and pumping.

Mr G. Oakes agreed to supply figures for Keadby Pumping Station to M. Brooke but he confirmed that four of the five pumps been working all winter.

Mr R. Cooper had now taken over permanently from Mrs E. Mayle. He updated on the Lower Idle Asset Management Scheme (slide 14) which would include data from the recent flood events. It was noted that this would incorporate 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); only 10% was required. In response to Mr M. Wagstaff, Mr Cooper confirmed that conveyance of the River Idle channel would be included in the project and all stakeholders would be consulted.

Moving on to Rationalisation (slide 15), Mr Cooper stated that there was pressure for all stations to become fish and eel compliant and they needed to consider whether these stations would be required in the future. Mr C. McGuinness queried the definition of

waterway in respect of BNG as many of the channels were artificially created and not designated as nature reserves. In response, Mr G. Oakes stated that BNG could be offset so provision was not necessarily made on the site. Mr McGuinness questioned why the EA was increasing BNG from that which was required. Mr M. Brooke queried how the EA would get around the requirements of the Mining Act when considering rationalisation. He also highlighted that there were still thousands of acres unable to crop. Mr R. Cooper confirmed that they would be considering this and would include Mr Brooke in the stakeholder engagement process.

Mr N. Sutton gave an update on delivery (slides 16-22). He stated that there was a lot of work to be done within the same timeframe/delivery window. Work on the River Torne from Auckley to Rossington had been undertaken last year but there was more tree work to do around the IPort at Rossington. Contractors had been engaged for the River Idle and would include some silt removal; this would be delivered by the EA inhouse, IDB and contractors. He stated that whilst there was the ability to redirect the precept money, they would get as much done as possible. The Chairman was pleased to see some real progress being made with work on the ground.

Members reported that where there was excessive weedgrowth, some rivers would need clearing twice this year and the EA may need to drop the levels to winter to enable the work to be undertaken effectively.

15. LOCAL AUTHORITY MATTERS

There were no representatives from Nottinghamshire County Council or North Lincolnshire Council present and no reports had been submitted.

16. UPDATES FROM IDBS

Covered elsewhere.

17. MEETING DATES

The following dates were noted:

- Lincolnshire Show - 19th and 20th June 2024 (ADA in attendance)
- ADA Conference - 13th November 2024
- Annual EA/IDB Liaison Meeting - November 2024 (date tbc)
- Branch AGM - 11th June 2025

The Chairman highlighted the importance of good attendance at the Branch meetings. It was important to support the Branch and these meetings were an ideal opportunity for members to meet informally and discuss issues with their neighbouring boards and partners.

Bearing in mind the cost of hosting such an event and the relatively low attendance, the possibility of joining with another Branch was discussed and it was agreed to investigate this further and report back.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

CHAIRMAN