

ADA Technical and Engineering Forum

Thursday 10th July 2025 – Meeting Notes

A meeting of the ADA Technical and Engineering Forum was held at Witham Fourth IDB Office, Boston, on Thursday 10th July 2025 at 9.30am

Present:

A Gilbert (AG), Witham and Humber IDB
M Kettley (MK), Witham and Humber IDB
J Neill (JN), Witham and Humber IDB
A Civello (AC), Witham and Humber IDB
P Noon (PNo), WMA
C Brady (CB), WMA *
K Vines (KV), South Holland IDB
L Taylor (LT), South Holland IDB
P Nicholson (PNi), Black Sluice IDB
L Whelan (LW), Black Sluice IDB
A Boden (ABo), WMC
J Boden (JB), WMC
E Johnson (EJ), Witham 4th IDB
D Braddy (DB), Witham 4th IDB
R Wright (RW), Witham 4th IDB
M Redding (MR), Middle Level Commissioners
R Towse (RT), Yorkshire and Humber IDB
D Pitcher (DP), Environment Agency
A Baptie (ABa), Lincs County Council
T Holmes (TH), Lincs County Council
G Nichols (GN), Lincs IDBs
T Manning (TM), Black Sluice IDB

Via Teams *

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed attendees, including those who were attending via Teams.

2. Matters arising from notes of July 2025 meeting

- Things had not progressed with the GIS Group since the last meeting. HS was not in attendance at the meeting. RD (LCC), is opening up a working group across RMA's, it was agreed that this action will be taken to the working group. **Action Complete.**

- No update to the LCC asset management project was provided as NW was not in attendance. **Previously requested update has not been received.**
- A specification for LCC gully outfalls into open watercourses, to be discussed and agreed between IDB's and LCC, had not progressed. AG confirmed the specification has been shared with NW (LCC), there has been no further correspondence. **Action Complete.**
- With regard to central government funding to assist in asset management work to scope the extent, and determine responsibility for assets, EJ raised to the group in the January 2025 meeting that he was prepared to put together a scope for this, which would be needed if funding were to be sought. **EJ to produce wording detailing what is required. Anyone with input into this to contact EJ directly. No further update.**
- EJ shared with the group that a webinar to demonstrate the new National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) will be communicated to IDB's in the near future. EJ to also liaise and include LCC. **EJ currently awaiting a response.**
- KN shared with the group that there was a change to the planned LCC Drainage Champions. Once in place, KN will share the information with the group. LCC officer area maps for the county had been shared with the group since the previous meeting. ABa confirmed officers are in place. **ABa to ask KN to provide details of persons in Champion roles across the area.**
- KV confirmed a list of current Engineer Forum invitees with had been shared with IM. **Action Complete.**
- LCC request for IDB asset information to be shared with LCC via shapefiles (ESRI/GIS) to allow LCC to update the County Water Asset Information. **No request sent, ABa to arrange formal request to IDB's.**
- DP confirmed that only generic EA team emails can be shared and not specific employee emails. **DP to share email details with the group.**
- Planned update from LCC on culvert ownership/responsibility following discussions at the January 2025 meeting. **KN or NW not present at the meeting. Update to follow at next meeting.**
- The group discussed the current Defra consultation on changes to the flood funding process in England. Discussions had already taken place between certain IDBs with regard to this, and a special meeting of the Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership Management Group meeting was due to be held on 11 July to discuss a combined response. The response deadline is 29th July 2025.
- DP informed the group that PSCA's have mostly been completed, with a couple to finalise.
- All other matters arising from the previous meetings minutes were agreed without additional comments.

3. Operational Issues

- DP raised concerns to the group regarding Dissolved Oxygen levels dropping across the area, with the prolonged hot periods since March believed to be the cause. Care to be taken when vegetation cutting commences, and dissolved oxygen levels should be monitored, as cut vegetation in the water will only worsen the problem.
- There were no other operational issues to report.

4. Asset Management

- There were no asset management points to report.

5. Health, Safety, and Welfare

- South Holland IDB reported a recent tractor fire during a training session. The tractor caught fire whilst in operation due to a build up of debris between the exhaust and exhaust guard. The debris consisted mainly of dry grass cuttings. Fortunately, due to others observing the tractor at the time as part of a training session, the fire was identified early and so action was taken to extinguish the fire immediately. Although a quick response was taken, the fire caused damage to wiring and covers/guards on the tractor. In normal circumstances, if the tractor was out cutting, it is felt that the fire would have progressed further before being spotted, which would most likely have resulted in a total loss.
- The EA reported a recent incident whilst bank cutting. An operative was operating an Aebi cutter and attempted to reach an area of vegetation not included within the work programme for that machine. As the operative entered the area, the gradient of the slope caused the machine to tip and roll. The driver was unharmed but damage was caused to the machine.
- Middle Level reported that during recent unconsented works carried out by a water utility company a 360 excavator tipped into a watercourse causing serious damage to the drain banks. The incident occurred when operatives were preparing pipes along the desired route but reached the drain, to overcome this, the operatives, attached pipes to the excavator boom arm and the operator extended the arm over the drain in an attempt to clear the drain and not delay works, due to the weight of the pipework it caused the excavator to tip forwards into the drain. Significant damage was caused to the drain due to the need for the batter to be excavated to allow the excavator to be pulled from its position. No injuries were sustained but the incident was reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- A discussion was had around the use of Smartfarmer and recent performance issues with the system. MR consulted the group on any other systems used. Other IDB's were able to share systems in use for lone working, but not for pre-use checks because other than South Holland IDB who also use Smartfarmer and are suffering from the same performance issues, other boards still use a paper format of pre-use checks.

Honorary Chairman & Secretary - Karl Vines

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6. Environment and Conservation

- KV raised to the group concerns around the wild release of Beavers in the UK, informing the group that in a recent Conservation meeting, the Lincs Wildlife Trust confirmed that beavers would not be released in areas such as Lincolnshire due to it being unfavourable habitat. Although this is positive, KV raised concerns over beavers entering the area in the long term, as the population increases, and that this is an area all IDB's should be aware of and monitor. **Further discussions required at future meetings.**
- DP consulted the group on mink trapping progress. All involved IDB's confirmed that trapping was still in progress and there has been a consistent fall in the number caught. DP raised concerns that although the mink population falling is a positive in one way, there has been a noticeable increase in rabbit and other rodent activity in watercourses and around assets since the mink population has fallen. This in turn is causing increased costs in pest/rodent control.
- PN consulted the group on how mudding activities are carried out across other IDBs, questioning if other boards lower water levels prior to works. Other IDBs confirmed that in the local area of the activity the nearest pumping station would be used to reduce the water levels but only to the lowest level in the pump operating range, the watercourse would not be completely empty.
- MR raised to the group, that recent watervole mitigation works completed by a local utility company to displace watervoles had been extreme and was not carried out within the parameters of the consent. It was further noted, that the utility company's use of a terram type material on the drain bed to deter watervoles, had actually attracted further watervoles to the area, and after consultation with Natural England, the only solution for this area was to be infilled, but at a significant cost. **MR asked if any board is interested in undertaking bank repair and faggot revetment works on a contractor basis to get in touch.**

7. Planning and Consenting

- No update was available with regards to the enactment of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the establishments of SuDS Approval Bodies.
- CB highlighted to the group concerns around the recent amendment to the SUDs standards. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems-suds> The amendment has seen minimum discharge rates increase to 3 litres/s/ha or Greenfield rate, whichever is higher. CB raised that this will have a huge impact on IDBs in the area due to the new discharge rate being significantly higher than previous working standards of 1.4 litres/s/ha, a standard most local IDBs work to currently. Other members of the group raised their concerns around drainage networks and pumping station capacities being overwhelmed by such an increase. At a national level, it was acknowledged that the new rate is suitable, but due to the flat low lying nature of the

the Lincolnshire Fens, which are predominantly pumped catchments, the new standard is not suitable. CB confirmed to the group that intervention during consultation via ADA had not been successful, but is now in the process of liaising with LRFA's for support to have the standard amended for the local area. **CB to liaise with local LRFA's and LCC to seek local amendment to the standards.**

8. Enforcement

- AB discussed issues with culvert ownership/responsibilities, in particular around LCC's stance on the matter. A recent situation with a IDB officer had highlighted that despite being installed by LCC, 600mm diameter and currently included on LCC's asset register, it does not mean LCC accept responsibility for a culvert. IDBs remain combined in their concern around taking the stance that riparian owners are expected to be responsible for highway culverts. **NW (LCC) required to update.**
- RW informed the group of a recent Section 23 enforcement case, where retrospective consent was not an option. Following consultation, the Board's solicitor suggested the use of a 'unilateral notice'. See <https://www.landregistryservices.com/information/agreed-notice-and-unilateral-notice/> This notice, is attached to the land title at Land Registry and will flag to solicitors or other parties on land registry or during sale/purchase processes. The group had not heard about this notice, and all parties were hopeful this will help moving forward. RW informed the group that there is a charge for the notice, this charge is based upon the value of the related property/land, on a sliding scale.

9. FDGiA

- GN provided an update on FDGiA proceedings. GN stated that Tranche 2A project deadlines have been extended to September 2025, but the Tranche 2B deadline still remained as 31 March 2026. GN reiterated to all IDBs that Defra do not believe meeting this hard deadline being an issue, and that boards must notify Defra as soon as possible if they believe the deadline will not be achievable. Other members of the group raised issues with third parties such as utility companies and contractors causing delays to works due to their own workloads, causing larger project delays. It was also raised that some contractors are not providing quotes now due to workloads, and the general thoughts of the group was that, had deadlines been flexible from the start, projects would have been better planned and delivered. Some IDBs raised that as we enter the winter period, delays will likely increase and achieving the current deadlines would be increasingly difficult. Finally, GN requested that IDBs respond to the Defra Funding Consultation and provide honest feedback to suggested changes. GN also explained that any project that is committed under contract before April 2026, will continue under the current regulations, but post April 2026 the new regulations will be imposed.
- DP informed the group of internal funding issues at the EA. This is leading to low and medium risk watercourses not being maintained under local funding. Other members of the group raised that they had also seen evidence of this, with some drains being added to the 'local choices' list, in a bid to drive the watercourses back onto maintenance programmes. This lack of EA maintenance has, in some areas, now caused IDBs to

undertake EA work at the cost of the IDB to ensure the IDB system can still function. The group agreed that this could be a long term issue. There is also a growing feeling of discomfort with the general public, due to recent flooding events and a lack of maintenance being provided by the EA. **It was agreed that the matter of IDBs now having to pick up EA maintenance work and undertaking it at the IDB's cost will be taken to the ADA Policy Committee, as it is not sustainable for IDBs to do this without the funding to cover the work.**

10. Items to be taken to ADA Policy Committee

- EA Revenue funding – decrease in internal EA funding has now led, in certain situations, to IDBs having to maintain EA watercourses, where the IDB is dependent on the EA watercourse for its discharge, leading to increased IDB costs.

11. Any Other Business

- The Ossian Windfarm project was discussed by the group. It was agreed that a group response to this project and future projects would be beneficial, as done previously on the Outer Dowsing project. However, no Board felt they had sufficient resource to take on this lead role, but would not want this to rule out future shared discussions between IDBs as these were still considered to be of value.

12. Date of next meeting

- The date of the next ADA Technical and Engineering Forum will take place on Thursday 15th January 2026. Venue – TBC.

Following the meeting, those who wished to attend were invited to a site visit of the recently opened Wrangle Horseshoe Pumping Station - thanks to Ed Johnson and the Witham 4th team for accommodating this visit.