SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board held at Chatteris Cricket Club on Thursday 13th January 2022

PRESENT

M R R Latta (Chairman)
C P K Lee (Vice Chairman)
A Allen
P W Allpress
R J Angood
T B Edgley
M E Heading
R J Lee
R H Smith
J O Sole
P E Sole
E F Veal

Mr R Hill (representing the Clerk to the Board) and Graham Moore, MLC Engineer was in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Criswell, M Jackson, W Veal.

Death of Lenton Allpress Esq

The Chairman referred to the death of Lenton Allpress Esq on 18th November 2021. Mr Allpress had been a long-standing member of the Board, retiring in 2003 after over 26 years' service to the Board. The Chairman informed members that Mr Allpress had been party to many key decisions, including a major involvement in the negotiations concerning the Block Fen Mineral Extraction Proposals.

Members stood for a minute's silence in memory of Mr Allpress.

RESOLVED

That the Board's appreciation of the services rendered by Mr Allpress as a Member of the Board be recorded in the Minutes.

B.2245 Declarations of Interest

Mr Hill reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in the Agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

The Chairman declared an interest in the planning applications (MLC Ref. Nos. 179, 188, 199, 226, 228, 232 & 258) received for R Latta (Farms) Ltd.

Mr R Lee and the Vice-Chairman declared interests in planning applications (MLC Ref. Nos.072, 148, 236, 237, 335, 177, 182, 298, 301 and 338) for P J Lee & Sons and (MLC Ref Nos 227, 231 and 240) for Pretoria Energy Ltd and (MLC Ref Nos. 305, 309, 326 and 334) for Pretoria Energy Company (Mepal) Ltd.

J Sole and P Sole declared interests in planning applications (MLC ref no 091 and 319)
The Chairman, P Allpress and M Heading declared interests (as Members of the Middle Level Board) in any matters relating to the Middle Level Commissioners.

M Heading declared an interest (as a member of the Manea and Welney District Drainage Commissioners) in matters involving the Manea and Welney DDC and the potential amalgamation discussions involving Sutton and Mepal IDB, Manea and Welney DDC and Upwell IDB.

B.2246 Confirmation of Minutes

R Lee reported that he was present at the previous meeting of the of the Board (1st June 2021) and that he would have declared interests in the same matters as the Chairman of the Board.

RESOLVED

That, subject to amending the previous Minutes to record R Lee's attendance and declarations of interest, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 1st June 2021 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2247 Resignation of Trevor Scott

The Chairman reported that he had been contacted by T Scott on 23rd December 2021, who had, for personal reasons, resigned from his position on the Board, and that Mr Scott had been a member of the Board since June 2006. He asked Members to give consideration to filling the vacancy created by Mr Scott's resignation.

RESOLVED

That no action to be taken to fill the vacancy at the present time, and for the matter to be discussed at the next meeting of the Board on 31st May 2022.

B2248 Goodjohn's Farm (proposed culvert)

The Chairman reminded Members of the background to this matter and the discussions from the previous inspection of the Board in Jun 2021. He reported that following the meeting a survey had been carried out and a new structure ordered with L R Boon and Sons, which had now been manufactured and that it was proposed to collect the new structure and instal it within the next couple of weeks.

RESOLVED

That the actions of the Chairman be approved.

B.2249 Potential Amalgamation Discussions – Sutton & Mepal IDB, Manea & Welney DDC and Upwell IDB

The Chairman referred to the possible retirement of the Board's District Officer, which could be a factor in these discussions. He reported that he had discussed the matter further with the District Officer, who will reach his state retirement age this year (June) and that he had indicated that he was currently looking to work a further two years, retiring and moving away from the area in June 2024.

In response to the Chairman, M Heading reported that Manea & Welney DDC had one member of staff and operated a tractor and flail mower, using contractors for slubbing. He considered the Board needed to consider all options to provide the best value for money, but, as both Boards were of a similar size, it may prove difficult for one workman to look after the maintenance works for both districts.

R Angood considered the Board should continue as it is and look to recruit a replacement to work alongside the District Officer, but continue to explore opportunities for closer working relationships with neighbouring Boards.

R Lee considered that any new employee should be given a minimum of one year working alongside the District Officer.

Members considered that there were no immediate benefits from amalgamating at this time, but considered it important for the matter to be kept under review and to also continue to investigate working more closely with Manea & Welney DDC.

RESOLVED

That no action be taken at this time, but for the matter to be discussed again at the next meeting of the Board in May.

B.2250 Water levels in the Counter Drain system

The Chairman reported that the seepage had been reduced significantly following works by the Environment Agency, although there was still more work to be done and the Environment Agency was planning to return to carry out further works to reduce seepage later on the year.

Although there were exceptional circumstances over Christmas 2020, there were instances of the Cranbrook Drain overtopping and the Chairman considered that the Environment Agency needed to look at the system holistically, taking into account the flows within the channels and operation of Welches Dam Pumping Station, as well as addressing the seepage issues. He informed Members that, overall, there have been significant improvements and he will continue to liaise with the Environment Agency staff with a view to get further works completed.

B.2251 Ouse Washes Section 10 Reservoir Middle Level and South Level Barrier Bank works

Mr Hill referred to the Newsletter from the Environment Agency dated December 2021.

B.2252 Low Level Restoration at Block Fen Account (Redland Aggregates) Limited

R Hill reported that there had been no real progress since the last meeting of the Board.

In response to R Smith, G Moore reported that the current position was for low level restoration, however, there had been some consideration from the developer concerning proposals for inert land fill, although no firm proposals for this had been received concerning this.

B.2253 Meter Readings – Lafarge and Tarmac

Further to minute B.2220, R Hill reported that he was unaware of there being further developments concerning the agreements as discussed at the last meeting, and, in response to the Chairman, confirmed that currently the required invoices had not been raised. The Chairman expressed dissatisfaction over the time this matter has been outstanding and requested that his concerns are conveyed to the office and that any outstanding matters are dealt with to enable invoices to be issued as soon as possible.

B. 2254 Retirement of District Officer

The Chairman referred to the discussion concerning this matter earlier in the meeting, and that he considered as the Board had approved to replace the District Officer, they should look to do this sooner rather than later.

R Lee considered that, depending on the Block Fen outcome, the Board could look to de-commission the diesel engine. In response to R Lee, the Chairman confirmed the diesel engine was equivalent to the three electric pumps. E Veal confirmed that W Veal had spent time at the pumping station with the District Officer to learn the procedure for starting and runnning the diesel engine.

A Allen considered the diesel engine was currently important and should be retained. In response to A Allen, the Chairman reported that currently it was the District Officer's plan to move away from the area when he retired, so the Board's bungalow at the pumping station would be available for a new employee.

M Heading queried current plans for emergency cover and the Chairman confirmed that the current position would be to engage contractors for drain maintenance works and that he was able to provide cover at the pumping station and would look to other members to assist with other duties.

The Chairman queried how the Board should go about recruitment, as he was aware of the volume of applicants from using on-line recruitment services. R Smith queried the pay structure that may be required to attract a suitable candidate and R Lee referred to the current employment situation for excavator drivers. The Chairman considered that Members should give consideration to the position with a view to drawing up a full job specification and progressing the matter further at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to take any further action as they consider appropriate should suitable candidates become available before the next meeting.

B.2255 Clerk's Report

Red Diesel

The recent ADA summary concerning red diesel was circulated to all members and the Chairman referred to the recent developments which appeared to confirm that red diesel would be able to be used while working for agricultural benefit, although there remained an outstanding issue concerning pumping, which, due to the low usage should not have a major impact on the Board, apart from the possibility of having to install a separate tank for the diesel engine.

RESOLVED

That the matter be kept under review and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to take any action they consider necessary upon receipt of further clarification/guidance concerning the use of red diesel.

Applications for Byelaw Consent

R Smith and P Sole declared interests in relation to applications for byelaw consents, in which both Members were respective applicants.

Water Resources East (WRE)

Members approved the financial payment for the year, being £125 for 2021/2022.

B.2256 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

The Board considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers.

With regards to the Engineer's comments concerning pump no.1, the Chairman reminded Members that the Board's policy was to monitor pumping units and should one fail, the standby pump be installed and a new unit be sourced. Members agreed to continue with this policy and authorised the Chairman to monitor the situation and take any future actions as he considers appropriate.

G Moore referred to the Cranbrook/Counter Drain (CCD) FRM Strategy and that the strategy vision is currently being updated with modelling work taking place during 2022. M Heading queried if the Environment Agency would be able to use compulsory purchase powers for parts of the scheme, and G Moore considered that they would, but that they would be looking to work with all stakeholders. He agreed to look into this aspect further.

Mixed Use Development on land at Tithe Barn Farm and south east of London Road, Chatteris – Hallam Land Management Ltd (MLC Ref Nos. 160, 184, 606 & 630)

G Moore referred to the proposals for a mixed use development with approximately 1,000 houses and that he, along with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, had met with the applicant towards the end of last year. He considered that the applicant was looking to get outline agreements in place in order to sell parts of the development now.

He informed Members that the majority of the development was within the highland catchment area so there would not be any special levy transfers with regards to the development, and that, as the proposals were to attenuate surface water run-off, there would not be any development contributions payable to the Board.

R Lee considered the Board should get some form of contribution for dealing with the future run-off and queried if the proposed attenuation area was sufficient for the size of the development. He drew attention to the point that both the attenuation area and watercourses on the site would need regular maintenance and it was important for proper long-term arrangements to be put in place.

In response to the Chairman, G Moore confirmed that it was proposed that the surface water would be attenuated to that of the greenfield site. R Lee queried the possibility of surface water being contaminated and then discharged into the Board's system and that, due to this, further diligence would be required.

The Chairman considered that as the area was highland, surface water from this area was already being discharged into the Board's system, and, as long as the attenuation worked as proposed, the development should not have any detrimental affect on the Board. He stressed the importance of the calculations provided by the developer being thoroughly reviewed by the Board's Consulting Engineers and that the future long-term management of all structures was carried out by a competent authority. He informed Members that it was his view that the Board should not take any responsibility whatsoever for structures on the site or any works upstream of the outfall into the Board's system.

In response to R Lee, G Moore confirmed that the Board is not a statutory consultee for planning, so documents can be approved by the planning authority without the approval of the Board.

G Moore further reported that the applicant has entered into a pre-application agreement, so therefore his fees for dealing with the process were being paid by the applicant and not the Board.

In response to M Heading, G Moore said that he was not currently satisfied that the proposed attenuation is satisfactory and therefore further investigation of the proposals and designs would be required.

Tarmac Site (Proposal to move drain)

G Moore referred to the proposals surrounding the removal of the section of District Drain and, if the flows were to go into the quarry, there would be long-term increased carbon costs relating to the pumping required. R Lee considered that as long as the agreed proposal did not have any detrimental effect on the Board's system and did not involve any costs to the Board, then either would be acceptable, however, the lower "carbon cost" option should be considered more appropriate. He further considered that, should the "new channel" option be considered, then compensatory storage for that lost should also be provided.

Mick George (removal of temporary structure)

G Moore informed Members of the background to this matter and P Sole confirmed that he had been contacted before Christmas concerning the removal of the temporary bridge, which he had agreed to (as land owner) but stated that he had also agreed that the concrete bases could be left in place as there was a possibility that a similar structure could be required in future years.

Right to Connect

G Moore outlined the current position concerning the right to connect to public sewers. R Angood referred to concerns with water authorities discharging combined sewer discharges into public watercourses. In response to the Chairman, G Moore confirmed that the use of combined public sewers was not an issue for the Board and there would be no impact to the Board either way.

RESOLVED

a) That the Engineers Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.

b) Mixed Use Development on Land at Tithe Barn Farm

i) That the Board would not be able to approve the proposals as presented

ii) That the Planning Engineer be authorised to go back to the applicant and inform them of the Board's position and for him to discuss proposals further with the applicant.

iii) That the Board support the outline proposals A-F within the Consulting Engineers report

iv) That the Board require updated proposals in accordance with their requirements to be made for consideration by the Board.

c) Tarmac Site

That, subject to a suitable gradient being available, the Board's favoured option would be the "new channel" between upstream of point 19 to point 7, providing compensatory water storage is provided to that lost with the removal of the channel.

d) Right to Connect

That due to the complexities involved, the Board would neither support or object to the proposals to remove the right to connect to public sewers.

B.2257 Conservation Officer's Newsletter

R Hill referred to the Conservation Officer's Newsletter which had previously been circulated to members.

B.2258 Claims for Highland Water Contributions – Section 57 Land Drainage Act 1991

The Clerk reported that the sum of £2434.78 (£6465.16 less £4030.38 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) had been received from the Environment Agency based on the Board's actual expenditure on [capital and] maintenance work for the financial year 2020/2021 together with the sum of £4066.49 in respect of 80% overpaid in respect of the financial year 2021/2022.

R Hill reported that submitted claims were higher than normal due to the winter 2020 rainfall events and there had been further information required to be submitted to the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency recognised the valuable work carried out by drainage authorities and had paid all claims in full.

B.2259 Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions

The Clerk reported that ADA had increased subscriptions by 1% for 2022, from £714 to £721.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription for 2022 be paid.

B.2260 Determination of Annual Value for Rating Purposes

The Board considered the recommendation for the determination of annual value for rating purposes

RESOLVED

i) That the determination recommended be adopted by the Board.

ii) That the Clerk be empowered to serve notices and to take such other action as may be necessary to comply with statutory requirements.

iii) That the Chairman and the Clerk be empowered to authorise appropriate action on behalf of the Board in connection with any appeals against the determination.

B.2261 Health and Safety

Further to minute B.2175(a), the Vice Chairman referred to the report received from Cope Safety Management following their visit to the District on 16th November 2021.

He referred to meeting with the Health & Safety advisor ad that all proposed works were now completed with an asbestos assessment at the pumping station and non-slip surfaces to be put on the outside steps to be arranged. He referred to the additional works carried out as referenced in the supplementary report. With regards to the moving of the fuel line, R Smith queried how often the diesel engine was used and the Chairman confirmed 2-3 times per year, but it was important to retain as a back-up to the electric pumps.

RESOLVED

That the report and actions of the Vice Chairman be approved.

B.2262 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2020/2021

a) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2021.

b) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2021.

B.2263 Defra IDB1 Returns

The Clerk referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2020/2021 which the Board noted and approved.

B.2264 Expenditure/ Estimate Update

The Board considered the Estimate Update for 2021/2022.

R Hill reported that although repairs were showing as being in excess of the budget allowance, this was a result of repairs to the Ruston diesel engine, repairs to the excavator and repairs to the weed-screen cleaner. Overall, although currently estimated as being slightly over budget, depending on the pumping required for the remainder of the financial year there could be opportunity for further savings.

The Chairman referred to the repair costs to the excavator and that there were currently further repairs being carried out. He reminded Members that the excavator was now around 10 ears old and in response to A Allan confirmed that it had now completed around 7,000 hours. Members agreed to review further at the next meeting when the Board's Capital Programme would be updated.

RESOLVED

That the update be approved.

B.2265 Date of Next Meeting

R Hill reminded Members that the next Meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday 31st May 2022 at 10:30, prior to which the District Inspection will be held at 08:30.

B.2266 Any Other Business

a) R Lee referred to the culvert at Holmewood House Farm which the Board assisted with the installation and it was now showing signs of reaching the end of its serviceable life.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

i) That the Chairman arrange an inspection by the District Officer and arrange for it to be included as part of the next District Inspection.

ii) That the Chairman be authorised to take any further action as he considers necessary.

b) The Chairman referred to last year's inspection where they received the application by Mr Newman to pipe and fill sections of watercourse and the Board, after much discussion, decided to refuse the application. He informed Members that Mr Newman had approached him with a proposal to fill the watercourses, install land drains in the field to outfall into his lake and then install an over-flow pipe into the Board's system. Members considered the proposals and implications, and for the reasons as for the previous requests, agreed to refuse the proposal.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

That the Chairman inform Mr Newman that the Board would refuse the proposal should an application be made.

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Chairman

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Date