

WALDERSEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
Special Meeting of the Waldersey Internal Drainage Board
hosted at Middle Level Offices at 5:00pm on Monday 11th March 2024

PRESENT

N Harrison P Hayes M Humphrey A Miscandlon M Mottram P Tegerdine B Wales

Paul Burrows, clerk to the Board was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence

B Darlow S Flint H Lankfer A Lenson J Smith

B.1295 Declarations of Interest

The Clerk reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

B.1296 Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair

The clerk reminded the Board that with P Lankfer resigning from the Board they had no Chairman. B Wales added that covering the roles of District Officer, Chairman and Vice Chairman was an uncomfortable proposition.

The clerk confirmed that he had both spoken to Defra who had verbally confirmed that in order to function a Board needs to have an appoint a Chair. He felt that given this the Board could not risk going into it's June rate-setting meeting without certainty that there was a Chair in place. Hence calling for this special meeting. The clerk had written to Board members seeking their self-nomination for either the role of Chair or Vice Chair.

N Harrison outlined that he was willing to help if required but would struggle long term. He added that he'd look to get the Board onto a stable footing but his leadership would be contingent on pushing forward towards an amalgamation with Hundred of Wisbech IDB as the two Boards are intrinsically linked.

RESOLVED

N Harrison appointed as Chairman

M Mottram appointed as Vice Chairman

B Wales continued appointment as District Officer

B.1296 Amalgamation with Hundred of Wisbech IDB

The clerk outlined that as also being clerk to Hundred of Wisbech IDB he had to report to them at their last meeting on 16th November 2023 the risk they face with Waldersey IDB having no Chairman, given the fact the two districts are hydraulically connected.

He added that Hundred of Wisbech IDB resolved to support "a proposal to amalgamate with Waldersey IDB and instruct the Clerk to engage Waldersey IDB with regards to the proposal with a view to discussing the matter further." In addition, they identified four members to form a sub-committee with Waldersey IDB members should Waldersey IDB support a proposal to amalgamate.

A Miscandlon agreed to the principle of amalgamation and B Wales added that in general it was a good idea however recognised there were others with some concerns. N Harrison added that the Boards were already connected hydraulically and financially with Hundred of Wisbech providing significant funding to Waldersey IDB for conveying and pumping water from their district. He added that an amalgamation would help with joint projects that are already being scoped and developed.

M Mottram shared his nervousness about an amalgamation and added that these concerns were reducing and reflected that the Middle Level would need further amalgamations in future. He outlined that his nervousness related to reducing the influence from people on the ground to the running of Boards if future Appointed Membership by Fenland District Council brought inputs that were not in the best interests of the core interests and responsibilities of the Board. The clerk added that under any amalgamation the Appointed Membership could only be a maximum of one more than the elected membership and ultimately all Board members have to act in the interests of the Board with the clerk and other members holding them to account. M Mottram added that he had no negative experience of Councillor inputs into Boards in his experience. B Wales added that the Appointed Members approach around Hundred of Wisbech rate setting last year did not help and A Miscandlon reflected that new members had learnt from that experience.

The clerk added that an amalgamation he considered as relatively future proof in terms of potential wider change or reform within the Middle Level and would bring some administrative efficiencies. He added that any proposal for amalgamation would need to be presented and approved by both Boards ahead of formal submission to the Environment Agency, Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and Defra.

RESOLVED

Support the proposal to amalgamate with Hundred of Wisbech IDB and instruct the clerk to bring a working group together to develop a proposal with delegated members from both Boards.

Delegate responsibility to M Mottram and M Humphrey to act on behalf of the Board as part of the above working group.

B.1297 Update on flail mowing complaint

The clerk confirmed to the Board that the matter had been settled with the claimant within the tolerance resolved by the Board at their previous meeting. He asked that the Board ought to consider how they wish to proceed in terms of their contractor.

A Miscandlon suggested that a line be drawn and the Board move on. Members supported this approach and welcomed a Councillor view on the matter. B Wales added that it was important to learn and M Mottram that it highlighted how some controls need reviewing and tightening not just on this Board but perhaps others too.

RESOLVED

That the clerk writes to the Board's contractor to close the matter.

B.1298 Date & Time of next Meeting

Wednesday 19th June 2024, 19:30, Rose & Crown

B.1299 Any other business

Board Membership was discussed given the vacancy left by P Lankfer and with lack of attendance from other Members. P Hayes will contact Waldersey Farms to establish if they have a suitable candidate to put forward. B Wales highlighted that N Buttress had indicated willingness to join.

B Wales reported the fence at the pumping station that was damaged. N Harrison agreed to discuss with the contractor likely involved.

B Wales reported a significant issue with Rings End weedscreen given the pressures of the winter. It was only now wise to operate manually with an estimated £30k repair cost. The clerk highlighted the recent government announcement of £75m to IDBs and whilst details of what this is for and how it would be distributed have not been communicated as yet, he anticipated that this is the type of issue that would be eligible.

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Chair

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Date