

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the East Harling Internal Drainage Board held on the 8th February 2005 at The Pines, Connaught Road, Attleborough, Norfolk at 10.30 am.

Present: Mr D Stammers (Chairman) Mr J Salter
Mr J Cracknell Mr A Southgate
Mr P Drake Mr R Thornton
Mr J Evans (Town Council) Mr C Wright (Clerk)
Mr J Nelstrop Mr A Bingham (Board Engineer)
Dr S Rothera (English Nature) Mr R Kemp (Breckland District Council)

1. Apologies were received from Mr P Lee and Mr J Askew.
2. Minutes of the meeting of 22nd September 2004 were approved, subject to one minor amendment and this was proposed by Mr Southgate and seconded by Mr Kemp and carried unanimously.

3. Matters Arising

(a) Developments within the Board

The Clerk and the engineer reported that there has been little activity within the Board, but the house on Hargham Road was now being built as an eco-house. Consultations had taken place with the Board and Breckland Council on the Planning Application for this.

(b) Dualling of the A11

Mr Bingham reported that he had had various meetings with the Environment Agency, May Gurney and The Highways Agency. Progress had now ground to a halt as a result of the public enquiry and the green light is awaited when the public enquiry report is issued.

(c) Extension of the Board

The Clerk reported that the Statutory Instrument had been advertised and the Department for Environment decision was awaited on the passing of the Statutory Instrument.

Mr Bingham said that Mrs Ilman continued to maintain her objection, which she had reported to The Department of the Environment. In view of the current concerns on control of water-courses, the Board maintained it's need to have control over the water-course as it was a major water-course taking surface water from Attleborough.

(d) Board Member Inspection Reports

Mr Thornton reported that there was no problem with the first section around his farm, but there was a problem when you crossed the Watton Road towards Breckles and a section of the stream was overgrown and slow moving. He felt that a digger was probably required, to rectify the situation. The Low Road section has been

trimmed and further up, there are really no problems. However, a piece of ditch has been piped and Mr Bingham said that he would inspect it.

Mr J Salter reported that a lot of work will be done on his section as a result of the by-pass improvement works and therefore no work was required there at present.

Mr A Southgate reported that water flows through his area were fine.

Mr J Nelstrop reported that Network Railway are doing some track laying adjacent to the stream and ballast was being tipped into the stream which was holding up the water. This will need to be removed. There are places with excess vegetation which needs to be cleared and owners of the lands adjoining the Board streams have allowed fencing to fall into disrepair and white electric tape to be trampled into the stream. This needs to be retrieved before work can be carried out. There are also out-buildings and fencing obstructing access to the water courses and rubbish has been tipped into the streams. On the next stretch of stream, there is a lot of fallen timber but an otherwise free ditch. There is then a short stretch of stream where the vegetation needs cutting but the banks are ok. It would appear that sewage is being discharged from a bungalow and this needs to be investigated. It would appear that a new house is proposing to do work near the stream and this needs to be looked at.

Mr P Drake reported that the section from Church Farm, Caston to Lower Stow Bedon is flowing well. There is a bad bit through John Dove's land but it is not critical. The next section is a nightmare because although the water is flowing, it is very overgrown. There is then an extremely good stretch, where the only problem is one large ash tree lying across the river.

Mr J Cracknell reported that between The White Lodge and the railway bridge there is a slip-in that needs to be dealt with. He felt a weed rake was required from the railway bridge up to Attleborough. The stream towards Old Buckenham is fine, until you come to reed in the stream through to Puddleduck, which needs to be dealt with.

Mr D Stammers said that there is one small stretch on his area where there is quite prolific weed growth, otherwise it is very good.

Mr Bingham agreed to contact Mr Lee for his report.

The Board acknowledged that with the accumulated maintenance fund from the previous year, most of these works could be scheduled to be done during the coming year.

(e) Banham Fen and Quidenham Mere

The Ecology Land and People report is now available and was produced. Discussions can now take place in respect of the implementation of the report. It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Salter that a sub-committee be set up to move the plan forward and deal with the implementation. It was proposed by Mr Southgate and seconded by Mr Thornton that the committee comprise

the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Clerk, Engineer and Mr Lee, the local Board member. This was carried unanimously. Dr Rothera reported that grant aid was now available and that recently Defra had increased the amount of grant aid for capital works on implementation of water level management plans in 87 sites of high priority and this site fell within such category. In these cases, the grant levels were up to 100%. The Board agreed to set a target for applications to be made for grant aid within six months of the meeting.

(f) Retirement of Mr J Balaam

It was noted that Mr Balaam intends to retire at Christmas. It was proposed by Mr Salter and seconded by Mr Evans that a suitable person be engaged to replace Mr Balaam immediately, so that that person can work in tandem with Mr Balaam until his retirement. It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Drake that an immediate advertisement be placed in the local press. It was proposed by Mr Salter and seconded by Mr Cracknell, that a sub-committee be set up to interview candidates for the job and that the committee comprised Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk. This was passed unanimously.

4. Conservation Issues

Dr Rothera said that the Board should now invoice English Nature for its contribution towards the implementation plan for Banham Fen and Quidenham Mere. He said that the Environmental stewardship scheme will become available this spring and there is plenty of good land available in the area for higher level schemes to be implemented. He felt Board members should be encouraged to prepare plans for their land and look at implementation of the higher level scheme. He felt that the work on the Board's drains which were carried out by careful raking and the use of the Board's employees were environmentally very sound and a great credit to the Board. He felt the Board should look at funding for conservation within the Board so that appropriate enhancement works can be carried out. Mr Nelstrop asked Dr Rothera how he felt the Board should act in respect of environmental matters so that it did not prejudice its status as an independent Board. Dr Rothera felt that the Board should produce a set of standards, to which it should work. He felt that the Board already worked within such a set of standards but that they should be in written form. The Board already takes steps to protect both water voles and otters, protected species within the Board area.

It was agreed that ratepayers should be encouraged to enter into the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and the higher level scheme in the Board's annual newsletter to be issued with the rate demands.

5. Election of Officers

Chairman:

Mr Southgate proposed and Mr Nelstrop seconded Mr D Stammers and this was carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman:

Mr Drake proposed and Mr Cracknell seconded Mr J Nelstrop and this was carried unanimously.

6. Approval of Payment of Accounts.

The Clerk outlined the situation in respect of the payment of accounts. The question of arrears was raised and it was noted that this currently stood at £671.38, which was mainly due to the outstanding Garrod rates. These will be paid by the end of the year. It was agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman would visit 3 outstanding ratepayers to see if they could obtain payment of the rates.

Accounts paid to be inserted here

It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Thornton that the approval of payment of accounts and that the assessments of less than £5.00 as produced be written off. This was carried unanimously.

Rates under £5 to write off

Number	Name	Amount (£)
7	Sayer	3.28
11	Twyman-Musgrave	4.20
17	Ilman	3.21
24	Baldwin	3.46
32	Boyd	1.77
37	Eagling Bros	4.88
41	Holland	3.99
43	Banham	3.20
53	Riseborough	3.40
77	Stevens	0.70
79	Woodrow Dec'd	1.88
83A	Fitt	2.94
89	Seth	1.66
99	Kerry	0.44
100	Sumsion	0.16
102	Peck	0.72
105	Elliston	0.60
107	Gooda	4.93
109	Nicholson	0.26
111	Chittenden	3.69
112	Carrington	3.32
114	Ashford	2.60
115	Gunn	2.94
117	Sanders	1.15
118	Man	3.97
119	Billiald	0.70
120	Bird	1.15
122	Bowen	3.00

125	Brown	1.07
126	Clarke	0.94
136	Goldsmith	2.86
164	Newbury	0.52
164A	Bootle	0.58
167	Bain	4.48
168	Reeves	1.45
173	Addfill	1.62
186	Tibble	1.59
189	Cracknell	1.77
190	Rix	1.55
	TOTAL	£87.98

7. Financial Position of the Board

The Clerk outlined the position of the Board and said that he felt the Board was standing in a very strong position at present. By the end of the year virtually all of the rates will be collected in and the costs will be well within budget.

It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Salter that the maintenance figure in the budget be adjusted and increased to £15,000.00 and that the Chairman have authority to authorise work during the year up to this amount. This was carried unanimously. It was noted that there will be an increase in employee costs in the year by up to £14,000.00 as a result of employing a new employee to take over from Mr Balaam, prior to Mr Balaam's retirement. It was agreed that this could be absorbed into the current year's budget out of reserves.

8. Wages and Salaries

In the absence of the Clerk and the Engineer, the Board considered these matters. It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Kemp that the Clerk's salary and the Chairman's expenses be increased by 3½% and that Mr Balaam's wages be increased by 3½%. It was agreed that Mr Bingham's fees be as proposed by him.

Mr Nelstrop proposed and Mr Drake seconded that the new employee be paid from the time he takes over from Mr Balaam at the equivalent rate of Mr Balaam and that until then, be paid at a rate by negotiation of the sub-committee.

9. Fixing the Rate

Discussion of the fixing of the rate ensued and as a result of these discussions, it was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Cracknell that the rate remains the same as last year's rate at 13 pence in the pound and that the notice of special levy should be served on Breckland Council.

The amount to be raised by rates being levied at 13 pence in the pound is a total of £26,540.64, which is split as to £19,321.22 for general rates and £7,219.42 in respect of the special levy.

10. Advertising the Rate

It was proposed by Mr Cracknell and seconded by Mr Thornton and carried unanimously that the rate be advertised and that the special levy be served on Breckland Council.

11. Any Other Business

- a) The Clerk circulated draft new standing orders. It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Kemp that there be 14 days notice for all meetings, except in an emergency. It was proposed by Mr Thornton and seconded by Mr Cracknell that the quorum for Board meetings be 4.
- b) The Chairman reported that Mr Balaam had approached him to say that more and more people were asking him for identification as he did his work. It was agreed to obtain an identification plaque for his vehicle and an identification badge for him and this was proposed by Mr Stammers and seconded by Mr Cracknell and carried unanimously.

In view of Mr Balaam's impending retirement, it was agreed to mark this with a presentation to him and a gathering to celebrate. It was proposed by Mr Southgate and seconded by Mr Cracknell and carried unanimously, that a presentation gift should be given of up to the value of 1 week's wages.

- c) The Board discussed whether they should have a field trip this year and it was agreed that such a trip should be arranged. It was suggested that other interested parties should be invited to accompany the Board on such a trip and a date was fixed for Wednesday 1st June 2005.
- d) Mr Nelstrop raised the question of precept and pointed out to Board members how it would have risen, had the Board not queried the precept two years ago. As a result of the Board's query, we are not in the position like some other Boards of having to complain now.
- e) Mr Nelstrop said the Board needed to have an action plan to let it be known that we are here. He felt a letter to David Noble should be written, to seek his advice on what we should do and also invite him on the Board field trip on 1st June 2005. It would be useful if we could see who we were fighting to remain independent.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting.