

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the East Harling Internal Drainage Board held on the Tuesday 5th February 2008 at The Pines, Connaught Road, Attleborough, Norfolk at 8.30am.

Present: Mr J Nelstrop (Chairman) Mr J Cracknell
Mr C D Wright (Clerk) Mr A Southgate
Mr J Salter Mr P Drake
Mr J Askew Mr P Lee
Mr R Thornton Mr C Hainsworth (Natural England)
Mr J Evans (Attleborough Town Council)
Mr A Bingham (Engineer)

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Kemp (District Council), Mr R de'Beer (Strutt & Parker/Quidenham Estate) and Mr D Stammers.

The Chairman opened by informing the Meeting that Mr Dudley Stammers had been unwell since his most recent hip operation and whilst he was beginning to feel better was not fit enough to attend the Meeting. Those present at the Meeting sent their best wishes to Mr Stammers.

2. Minutes of the meeting of the 25th September 2007 having been previously circulated were approved and signed by the Chairman. This was proposed by Mr Salter and seconded by Mr Lee and carried unanimously.

3. **Matters Arising**

- a) ***Developments within the Board***

There has been nothing significant within the Board, although there are Plans to develop 20 houses at Stone Bridge Camp which is on the edge of the area where water will drain through the Boards streams. Mr Bingham is looking into this application. Long term plans for the development of Attleborough have now been released as part of the Local Development Framework consultation.

- b) ***The Dualling of the A11***

This has now been completed. Mr Bingham reported that there are one or two snagging bits, which will be completed over the next month or so. A commuted payment has been agreed with the Highways Agency, together with the Engineers and Clerk's costs.

- c) ***Extension of the Board***

The position in respect of Mrs Illman was outlined and the efforts that have taken place both in meeting her with the Environment Agency and DEFRA and the discussions that the Clerk subsequently had with her. It was proposed by Mr Nelstrop that the Board proceeds with the agreed areas but one last attempt should be made to persuade Mrs Illman. It was agreed that the Board would investigate the drainage through the McAlpines Development to see whether or not the surface water drain that discharges into the Board area is draining correctly, or whether, as is thought, these drains have been laid at the wrong levels. Therefore the drainage comes through the formers Gaymers Factory

Site and round past Mrs Illman's Property. Mr Bingham will approach Anglian Water so that these tests can be made. This was proposed by Mr Nelstrop and seconded by Mr Drake and carried unanimously.

d) *Banham & Kennninghall Fens & Quidenham Mere*

Mr Bingham reported that a project appraisal report had been submitted to DEFRA. He was hopeful that money will now be allocated. Chris Hainsworth said that he had been chasing through his contacts. He felt that the Mere levels are too high. Mr Bingham said that although it was wet he had been able to walk around the Mere. Natural England are working with Quidenham Estate to persuade them to apply for the Higher Entry Level Stewardship Agreement. Chris Hainsworth said that Natural England were very keen to see the works start.

e) *Enmainment of the River Thet*

This is due to be raised at the Environment Agency/DEFRA Meeting this April. Mr Nelstrop said he was concerned that the state of the bridge at Harling Mill and Mr Bingham said that he would pursue the Environment Agency in respect of this.

4. Conservation Issues

Mr Bingham reported that no mechanical clearing had taken place this year and all works have been carried out by Simon O'Malley by hand.

Chris Hainsworth said that the emphasis had now changed in respect of disturbance of water voles, nesting birds, otter's etc, imposing greater responsibility on those carrying out the works. He agreed to let Mr Bingham have full details. Natural England had no adverse comments in respect of conservation issues.

5. Board Member Reports

Mr P Lee: At the exit of the whittle into the Thet there is a tree down but this is not causing a problem. Between the sewerage works outfall and the oil pipeline, several trees need clearing. Between the Monastery Bridge and Fisherman's Corner there is some tree and weed growth that needs to be dealt with.

Mr P Drake: There have not been any complaints within Mr Drake's area but he is inspecting further next week and if there are any further comments he will contact Mr Bingham.

Mr R Thornton: There is not too much in the way of problems in his area. The stream towards Low Road needs to be looked at this year.

Mr J Askew: There are a few Willow trees that need to be dealt with on the Attleborough side of the fen. Water is going through but the adjacent land floods when water conditions are bad.

Mr A Southgate: Is not aware of any problems in his area.

Mr J Evans: The Town Council have no comments for the Drainage Board.

Mr J Salter: No works have been carried out on the stream in his area since the bypass works. It is bad upstream from Hall Bridge and also the stream from Mill Road needs clearing.

Mr J Cracknell: The stream through his area is not too bad but not sure how good it is through Hargham Woods. A weed rake needs to be taken through from Attleborough to the Railway Bridge after harvest.

Mr D Stammers: A digger needs to be put through Larling Fen after the harvest.

Mr J Nelstrop: There are some fallen trees and some pallets in the stream near post pint and this will be looked at.

6. Election of Officers

Chairman: Mr Drake proposed and Mr Thornton seconded Mr D Stammers and this was carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman: Mr Nelstrop proposed and Mr Thornton seconded Mr A Southgate and this was carried unanimously.

7. Approval of Payment of Accounts

The Clerk outlined the situation in respect of payment of accounts and reported that there were outstanding rates of £788.42, the majority of which would be recovered by the end of the financial year. After consideration it was proposed by Mr Cracknell and seconded by Mr Lee that the payment of accounts be approved.

It was proposed by Mr Cracknell and seconded by Mr Lee that the rates under £5.00 be written off in accordance with the schedule attached to the minutes.

8. Financial Position of the Board

The Clerk outlined the financial position of the board and gave details of the current year to date, the anticipated position at the end of the year and a proposed budget for 2008/2009. The Clerk proposed a maintenance figure in the budget of £20,000.00 for machine work as none have been carried out in the previous year, partly due to the incapacity of the Chairman. The budget was accepted and this was proposed by Mr Drake and seconded by Mr Evans.

9. Wages & Salaries

The position in respect of Mr O'Malley was outlined. Mr Nelstrop said the board should consider paying some of Mr O'Malley's expenses of maintaining his vehicle. Mr Lee felt that Mr O'Malley deserved an above inflation pay rise. After considerable discussion it was proposed by Mr Cracknell and seconded by Mr Askew that the board would pay up to £1,500.00 of maintenance for Mr O'Malley's vehicle's against the production of Invoices and give Mr O'Malley an increase in his salary of 3% from the 1st April.

It was proposed by Mr Drake and seconded by Mr Southgate that the Chairman's expenses be increased to £530.00 per annum.

In the absence of the Clerk and the Engineer it was proposed by Mr Thornton and seconded by Mr Askew that each received a 3% increase in their fees.

10. Fixing the Rate

The Board considered the budgeted figures set out before them and in particular the fact that the commuted sum payment would be received shortly from the Highways Agency and that interest on this sum would generate additional income for the Board of approximately £6,000.00

After careful consideration it was proposed by Mr Cracknell and seconded by Mr Drake that there be a reduction in the rates of £0.03p in the pound (£), making the rate for the year 2008/2009 £0.09p in the pound (£).

The amount to be raised by rates levied at £0.09p in the pound (£) is a total of £18,420.65, which is split as to £13,328.07 for general rates and £5,092.58 in respect of the special levy raised on Breckland Council.

11. Advertising the rate and serving the special levy

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

12. Any other Business

1. The Clerk reported that he had received a letter from the Audit Commission indicating a change of Auditor for the coming year. The Board had the opportunity to comment on this if it felt appropriate to do so. The Audit Commission proposes to appoint Mazars LLP as the Auditor of the Board. This was noted.
2. It was agreed to have further Board member visits in July with a date to be fixed in due course.
3. It was agreed to update the website of the Board.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting.