

Minutes of a meeting of the Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners held on Thursday 15th May 2014 at the Admiral Wells, Station Road, Holme at 10.45am.

Present J R Papworth (Chairman), J S Papworth, S Papworth, A Bowley, J Rule, M F Newman, M Ulyett (Wildlife Trust), R Wright (Clerk), Mrs M A Wright.

Apologies for Absence L Parker, M Broughton.

111/14

a) Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED – that J R Papworth be appointed Chairman. J R Papworth duly completed and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

b) Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED – That S D Papworth be appointed Vice Chairman. S D Papworth duly signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

c) Appointment of Auditors

The Chairman reported that the Audit Commission have appointed Littlejohn LLP as external auditors for five years as from 2014/2015

Gerry Whitfield an ex Audit Commission Manager was duly elected to undertake the internal audit arrangements of the Board.

112/14 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2013 were correctly recorded and that they be signed as being a true record.

113/14 Matters Arising

a) Old Pump House – Further to minute 101/13(a) – The Chairman reported that the old pump house building was secure and sound. The Commissioners had placed warning signs and undertook an annual risk assessment. Safety works to the walkway decking were required. The Chairman would take the appropriate action. The Commissioners agreed that it was worthwhile to preserve the pumps and building. The clerk would contact the Great Fen Project to ascertain their thoughts

b) The problem was with badgers in the bank. Cliff Caron the Environment Officer at Middle Level was in the process of applying for a licence to move them on. This would not solve the major issue of warrens in the bank it would merely move the issue further along the bank.

A Bowley reported that badgers were evident in the flood bank in the north west of Woodwalton Reserve.

114/14 Great Fen Project

Alan Bowley reported that Darlow's Farm had been cropped for hay and then grazed by cattle. A programme to control rushes and thistle's were implemented and proved successful.

Middle Farm would be linked with Darlow's and sheep would graze after the hay removed. As areas in Middle Farm are lower than Darlow's it is proving difficult to wet. Some fields would be left to natural regeneration.

A Development Plan for the next 5-10 years has been formulated and a copy supplied to the Chairman. The Clerk requested a copy for the office. Another issue was that the drainage from Higney Farm went through Middle Farm.

Problems with using Woodwalton as a flood storage area were being revisited in a review with Middle Level's Water Management Plan.

The works within the Holmewood Board at Corney's and Rymes Reed bed area were explained. Also Engine Farm would revert back to the Wildlife Trust later in the year.

The Clerk referred members to the 2013/2014 BAP report that had been circulated.

115/14 Maintenance of Channels

a) The Chairman reported upon drain works undertaken in 2013/2014, 98.25 hours @ £35 per hour £3,438.75. Flailing works 35hours @ £35 per hour £1225. The lengths cleaned were shown in blue on the attached plan.

b) The Commissioners to consider works for 2014/2015:- Lengths 1 – 5, 14-15 & 15 – 16 coloured green. The drains to be cleaned in 2015/2016 were also shown but coloured orange.

c) Drain work charges – The Clerk reported that current machine rates for Fen Ditching Co Ltd (JCB 145 is £37 per hour and transport £100), P Davis, FH130 £36.50 & P J Thory Ltd (Volvo 160 £39.00 per hour, CAT 323E £45 per hour and transport £125) and D & J Papworth & Co (360 machine £35.00 per hour flail mower £35.00 per hour) Flail mowing R + C Ashman £36 per hour. Flail mowing G & D Beaton £33 per hour
RESOLVED – that D & J Papworth & Co be appointed drainage contractors for 2014/2015. Their charges being machine £36 per hour and flail mowing £36 per hour.

116/14 Pumping Station

a) A J Speechley and Son had fitted a new bracket and holder to the extra low system and serviced pump and panels at a cost of £491.36.

b) Further to minute 104/13(a) the Clerk reported that the registration of the pumping station was still under review.

c) Inlet/outfall structures – Further to minute 104/13 Drake Towage Ltd carried out works to the flap valve at a cost of £1,300.

d) Vulcan Inspection Services – an inspection of the Control panel and Centrifugal pump and its motor and the Gear box recorded “No defects. The inspection took place on 11th December 2013

e) The Chairman reported that the pump had run for 20,163 hours and its condition was reasonable.

117/14 General Matters

a) Planning - The Clerk reported that the Consulting Engineer had dealt with no planning

applications.

b) Risk Management

The Clerk reported upon the risk management assessment and that a review of the Board's insurance cover has been made: - In accordance with Defra/ADA the following are to be considered for adoption:-

Complaint procedure, Corporate Procurement Policy, Fraud & Corruption Policy and Whistle Blowing

RESOLVED – that the policies and procedures are approved and adopted and arrangements for the payment of invoices through internet banking be made no other changes to the Standing orders or Financial Regulations are required.

c) DEFRA

Amalgamations – The Clerk reported that no further developments have been made

d) ADA – The Clerk reported that the ADA Demonstration was held at Cross Guns Pumping Station Wisbech PE13 4AY on Wednesday 17th July 2013

e) Banking – The bank balance as at 31st March 2014 stood at £35,153.87.

f) Internal Auditor report “I can confirm that in my opinion the systems of financial control are effective and the accounting records are up to date with regular reconciliation statements. Payments have good supporting documentation and income is properly recorded and banked. There is a good audit trail from the cashbooks and the various supporting documents to the data produced in the annual return. His report was adopted.

118/14 Payments – The Commissioners considered and approved the income & expenditure during 2013/2014

Payments - Vouchers 1 – 25 £18,558.29

119/14 Annual Accounts 2013/2014

a) The Commissioners considered and approved the Annual Account's and Statement of governance for year ending 31st March 2014

The audit of the 2013/2014 accounts has been advertised and accounts are available for inspection from 9 May to 6 June 2014.

120/14 Estimates of Income and Expenditure

The Commissioners considered and approved the estimates of Income & Expenditure for 2013/2014.

The payment of the Clerk's fee for 2013/2014 was £2,350. The Commissioners gave consideration of the Clerk's fee for 2014/2015 would be £2,550.

The payment made for looking after the pumping station for 2013/2014 was £850 but had been agreed at £800. The Commissioners approved a fee of £800 for 2014/2015. The overpayment in 2013/2014 would be taken off the 2014/2015 charge. The Commissioners approved gross expenditure of £14,727 and net £14,710.

121/14 Rates and Levy Requirement

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2014/2015: -

- | | | |
|----|--|--------|
| a) | Proportion to be borne by Agricultural Sector | 96.22% |
| b) | Proportion to be borne by Special Levy issued
To Huntingdonshire District Council | 3.78% |

A Bowley asked how the rate was calculated and the Clerk explained the land was valued on a rental basis on values in 1990 and all other properties were collected on the old rateable values adjusted back to 1990 levels.

In 2014/15 a rate of 1p together with corresponding special levy would raise £612.98. The estimated net expenditure of £14,710 in 2014/15 is equivalent to: -

- a) A rate of 24p in the £ on agricultural land and buildings to raise £14,155.44
- b) A special levy on Huntingdonshire District Council of £556.08

In 2013/2014 agricultural land paid £14,155.44 (24p) and the District Council £556.08

13 Any other business

A Bowley reported that this would be his last meeting as he would be retiring later in the year. He had been employed by Natural England at Woodwalton for 23 years and the Chairman said that his expertise and knowledge would be greatly missed.

14 Date of next meeting May 2015

The meeting was closed at 12.08pm