

# minutes



Meeting FLOODING (DRAINAGE AND WATERCOURSES)  
SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 28 April 2008 (commencing at 10.30 am)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

## COUNCILLORS

Yvonne Davidson (Chair)  
Andy Stewart (Vice-Chair)

John Carter	A	Sue Saddington
John Clarke	A	Dave Shaw
Tom Pettengell		Yvonne Woodhead
A Ken Rigby		

## NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Councillor Michael Bennett - Bassetlaw District Council  
Councillor Melvyn Shaw - Newark and Sherwood District Council  
Councillor Mel Shepherd - Gedling Borough Council

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Vincent Dobson  
Representatives from Parish Councils

## MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 31 March 2008, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rigby and Saddington.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

## NEWARK AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Steve Broadhead, Clerk and Engineer to Newark Area Internal Drainage Board (IDB) gave an introduction to his organisation's role. He explained that IDBs were

statutory authorities, established under an Act of 1936 to provide drainage in low-lying areas. Newark Area IDB covered 355 km<sup>2</sup> of the Trent Valley and Vale of Belvoir, defined by a contour line 8ft above the highest known flood level.

The Board maintained 600 km of watercourses and pumping stations, which discharged into Environment Agency (EA) watercourses such as the Trent. There was a strong environmental aspect to the work, with close liaison with wildlife trusts and Natural England.

The Board comprised 12 elected members and 13 district councillors, and spent some £1m pa raised from a levy, government grant and individual farmers. Mr Broadhead acknowledged that the Board's area had been badly affected by the 2008 summer floods. As a consequence, all the affected watercourses had been surveyed, a change to the Board's weeding regime was under consideration, and Mr Broadhead had attended many public meetings. He offered to provide a copy of the Board's maintenance programme.

Asked about the Board's enforcement powers, Mr Broadhead said that these had not been used in his 30 years with the organisation. However, they did pursue complaints, which often turned out to be neighbour disputes. He added that district and county councils also had enforcement powers. He commented that the Ministry of agriculture used to give grants to improve drainage.

Councillor Carter commented that, given the number of agencies involved, and the frequency of sub-contacting, it was unclear who people should turn to if there was a problem. Councillor Davidson suggested that this might be a recommendation from the review. In response to comments about flooding with sewage in urban areas, Mr Broadhead pointed out that there were now targets about surface water flow on new developments. The Board was not itself responsible for surface water or sewage.

Councillor Davidson stated that a number of comments being made (not recorded in the minutes) were more relevant to the previous review of fluvial flooding. She offered to circulate the final report of that review to the representatives present. There was reference to problems created by people building on top of culverts. Councillor Carter referred to the Environment Agency's policy of uncovering culverts. Mr Broadhead gave the River Maun in Mansfield as an example of this, and said that the Board's policy also was against culverts.

There was reference to the failure of a pumping station in the Laneham IDB area. Mr Broadhead explained that pumps could fail, and that each board made its own assessment of the risks and remedies. There had been no failure of pumps in 2007 in his area.

## **REPRESENTATION FROM PARISH COUNCILS**

Councillor Davidson welcomed the representatives from parish councils worst affected by the summer 2007 floods. She invited each to tell the committee about their experiences, which are summarised below.

Balderton: new roads and developments would create further pressure

North Leverton: Emergency Planning had responded well. Roads had been repaired promptly. The parish council had devised its own emergency plan. There were concerns about the enlargement of the village putting pressure on infrastructure, the time being taken to repair the school, and consultation about planning approval for the temporary classrooms.

Walkeringham: 60 houses had been flooded. Emergency Planning had been very helpful. The parish council had updated its own emergency plan, and increased the cleaning of the village drain from two to three times a year. There ought to be a body with overriding responsibility, as recommended by Pitt. It was too easy for people to claim something was not their responsibility.

Southwell: the parish council had drawn up a report on the flooding, with ten recommendations. The County Council and EA were doing a modelling exercise on Potwell Dyke. Particular concerns were responsibility for clearing drains as the ownership of playing fields and parts of the Minster School site changed, and ongoing worries about gully clearing. Praise for the district council and Emergency Planning.

Burton Joyce: similar problems to other areas, but highlighted householders unaware of their riparian responsibilities. The parish council had prepared a leaflet to inform them about these. There was disappointment with agencies' responses and lack of communication since summer 2007.

Woodborough: long term efforts to get ditches and culverts cleared. EA had cleaned the beck and culverts. The County Council was looking at whether any flood prevention work would be cost-effective.

Lowdham: flood defences installed after flooding in 1999 had failed in 2007. EA and Severn Trent were looking at remodelling them. Agencies had responded well, though emergency services coordinated poorly once they had arrived. Planning new houses needed to consider their impact on existing dwellings.

Councillor Davidson thanked everyone for their contribution. There was discussion about the impact of new developments in flood plains, and the lack of clarity about responsibilities for watercourses. Councillor Davidson pointed out that improved coordination might be one of the review's recommendations.

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

Martin Gately, Scrutiny Officer, drew particular attention to the comments on jet washing of wheelie bins, and to the visit to Lowdham on 6 May.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm.

## **CHAIR**