

EUXIMOOR INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Euximoor Internal Drainage Board
held at the Middle Level Offices, March on Wednesday the 8th June 2016

PRESENT

N R Russell Esq (Chairman)
C W Albutt Esq
J T Clarke Esq
J E Heading Esq

P Russell Esq
W Sutton Esq
P M Tegerdine Esq
F H Yeulett Esq

Miss Samantha Ablett (representing the Clerk to the Board) was in attendance.

B.872 Declarations of Interest

Miss Ablett 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.873 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 3rd June 2015 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.874 Clerk to the Board

Miss Ablett informed the Board that the Clerk intended to stand down from the office of Clerk of the Board at the end of 2016, that the Middle Level Commissioners would be taking appropriate steps to appoint his replacement and that the Clerk would keep the Board informed

B.875 Filling of vacancies

Further to minute B.848(b), consideration was given to the filling of the two vacancies on the Board

RESOLVED

That no action be taken to fill the vacancies at the present time.

B.876 Water Framework Directive

Further to minute B.850, Miss Ablett reported that the Anglian River Basin Liaison Panel, of which the Clerk was a member, have considered the draft updated River Basin Management Plan revision and the regional programme of projects funded by Defra for Water Framework Directive. She reported that the Clerk had also been advised that the statutory Plan to be sent to Ministers would be a "high level" generalised document and not contain the list of local "measures" which appeared in the many schedules to the 2009 Plan. Whilst this made the 2009 Plan rather

cumbersome, it did at least set out the measures expected in relation to a water body, whereas the present framework leaves the relevant measures to be discussed locally. Part of the ongoing work is to settle what "mitigation measures" are appropriate to the artificial and heavily modified water bodies of the Fens to ensure that they satisfy the requirement to reach Good Ecological Potential. The Middle Level Commissioners' Environmental Officer, Cliff Carson, is a member of a Group, looking at reasonable mitigation measures for such bodies, which are likely in fact to correspond with what was already in our Biodiversity Action Plans and therefore require, as previously advised, little additional work.

Miss Ablett advised that the Clerk had commented on the revised plan but had to date received no feedback on either this or on the earlier flood risk management plans despite promises from the Environment Agency that this would occur.

Miss Ablett reported that the Clerk had, however, continued discussions with the Environment Agency's local Water Framework Directive teams. For IDBs in the MLC area, it has been accepted that the Middle Level area will be designated as one water body for the purposes of the 2015 Plan and that, with the exception of Bury Brook, the whole of the "water body" will be designated as artificial; the exception being Bury Brook which is classed as heavily modified.

B.877 Water Transfer Licences

Miss Ablett reported that Defra have advised that they propose to bring into force the changes to the water abstraction licensing system, which were outlined and enacted in the Water Act 2003. Successive proposed implementation dates have, however, come and gone. Most significant amongst these is the requirement that abstractions simply transferring water from one watercourse to another by IDBs become subject to licensing.

Miss Ablett reported that the Environment Agency have however also now consulted on a proposed charging regime for transfer licences. This following correspondence with Rory Stewart MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, appears to be a "one off" charge of £1,500 imposed to "recover the Agency's costs of considering the grant of the Transfer Licence", rather than an annual charge but the Clerk had continued to object to it on the basis that, since water is transferred to serve licences granted to end user abstractors by the Agency, the costs of administering such licences should already be met. The Clerk had also taken the opportunity to raise this matter during the Ministerial Visit to Denver, as did representatives of the Downham and Ely IDB Groups. It was also pleasing to report that ADA, after inaction on the matter, appeared at last to be taking this up with Defra.

Miss Ablett reported that the Defra consultation appeared in December but was then withdrawn hours later. It was however, formally reissued in January with a period for responding lasting until 8th April. Despite what had previously been stated, the consultation proposes that Transfer Licences may well have a volumetric quantity based on what has been taken in the previous 4 years. Members will be aware that the water transferred into IDBs in this area is mainly to serve irrigation licences granted by the Environment Agency and the costs in relation to which have already been recovered by the Environment Agency.

Miss Ablett reported that it also appears from Defra that their longer term aim, as part of the Water Abstraction Review, would be for IDBs to be given the power to take over water resources management within their catchments, from the Environment Agency. This was an interesting concept and discussion proposals, which would enable IDBs to deliver the abstraction licensing system and recover costs, were awaited. Defra are therefore keen that nothing in this present consultation will prejudice such an outcome and may well be willing to discuss more fully, the effect of the Transfer Licence proposal.

Miss Ablett reported that where a Board had more than one inlet, a separate licence would be required at a proposed "one off" charge of £1,500 imposed to recover the Agency's costs of considering the grant of the Transfer Licence, rather than an annual charge, where the abstraction took place from different watercourses.

Miss Ablett reported that within the proposals was an exemption for ports abstracting below the tidal limit and that the Clerk had queried why this was not also an exemption for IDBs.

Following discussions with Defra, the Clerk felt it possible that this exemption could also be granted to IDBs.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk be asked to write to DEFRA stating the Board's objection to the water abstraction licensing system and the charges attached.

B.878 Flail mowing in the District 2016/2017

- a) Consideration was given to flail mowing operations in the District for 2016/2017.

RESOLVED

That the District Officer be engaged to undertake flail mowing operations on the District drains in 2016.

- b) Members considered flail mowing charges for 2016.

RESOLVED

That the current charge remain at £30 per hour.

(NB) – The Chairman and Mr P Russell declared an interest when this item was discussed.

B.879 Possible Amalgamation with March East IDB

Further to minute B.869(ix), Mr Albutt reported that he had raised the question of a potential amalgamation at the 2015 meeting of the March East IDB whereupon it was resolved that their Chairman and Vice Chairman be authorised to discuss further with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Euximoor IDB.

B.880 Consulting Engineers' Report

The Board considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers, viz:-

Euximoor I.D.B.

Consulting Engineers Report – May 2016

Weed Control and Drain Maintenance

At the Chairman's request an allowance has been made for any machine cleansing works, reed spraying and flail mowing deemed necessary within the district this year.

Cottons Corner Disused Outfall

Further to the last meeting the outfall structure on the 16 Foot River is still seized in the open position. As previously reported the only options likely to be consented by the Middle Level Commissioners remain blocking off the structure with clay or concrete or returning the flap valve to service. The Board's instruction is therefore required.

Pumping Stations

Iron Bridge

The weedscreen cleaner's ultrasonic water level differential controller, which had developed a system error, was repaired by installing a firmware update. A replacement transducer was also required.

The Chairman has dealt with the improvement works to the access steps and handrail at Iron Bridge. Reed Fen Pumping Station remains to be completed.

Reed Fen - Plant Condition

At its last meeting the Board agreed that the pumps were not to be overhauled at this time, but monitored on a regular basis.

A recent inspection showed that the pumpsets continue to operate reasonably well and give little indication of any major mechanical or electrical problems. The Board may therefore wish to again postpone any inspection/overhaul.

Weedscreen Cleaner

During September 2015 it was reported that the weedscreen cleaner grab was stuck in the drain. An inspection revealed the grab tines to be badly bent having come into contact with a dam board.

The grab top/bottom adjustment was re-set after repairs to the tines had been completed. The hydraulic pump relief valve was checked and found to be operating correctly and the cleaner tested in auto and manual, and left all working correctly.

Since the dam board is so close to the grab it is recommended that the Board give consideration to removing the remaining dam boards to avoid this happening again.

The machine's manufacturers were contacted and they confirmed they had not experienced this problem with any other of the many machines they have installed.

Pumping hours

Reed Fen

Hours Run no 1 – May 15 – May 16 = 382

Hours Run no 2 – May 15 – May 16 = 27

Total Hours Run - May 15 = May 156 = 409

Hours Run no 1 – May 14 – May 15 = 803

Hours Run no 2 – May 14 – May 15 = 678

Total Hours Run - May 14 – May 15 = 1481

Iron Bridge

Total Hours Run – May 15 – May 16 = 142

Total Hours Run – May 14 – May 15 = 458

Changes to Planning Procedures

Further to the introduction of the previously discussed pre-/post-application discussion process other procedures have been introduced, currently on a trial basis. These include, where relevant, a fixed fee basis for some services which has arisen from discussions and agreement with applicants, agents and engineering consultants.

These include the following:

- (a) In respect of relatively simple enquiries the Commissioners are currently offering a free Development Control and Consent "Surgery" on the third Tuesday of the month. Appointments are limited to 15 minutes during which applicants are able to discuss their proposals and at which it can be determined whether pre-/post-application discussion is required for Discharge/Byelaw Consent issues.

To date the up take has been limited, but the service has helped to improve consent applications and thus ensure that they can be processed smoothly and quickly.

- (b) A soakaway certification and checking service has been introduced. A number of enquirers have undertaken this service to ensure the acceptability of soakaways/infiltration devices in compliance with the Land Drainage Act and the Commissioners'/Boards' byelaws where it can properly be shown to attenuate flows/volumes.
- (c) Completing the "Acceptability of Surface Water and Sewage Effluent Discharge" form. This is a simple form where responses are made to four questions related to surface water/treated effluent disposal.

Following an initial surge in requests for this procedure demand has recently slowed. We have had to advise some enquirers that this is not a consent document nor does it confirm agreement that a water level/flood risk management strategy has been agreed.

The responses from these procedures have been positive and will continue for the foreseeable future, to be reviewed at a later date.

Initial internal discussions concerning the introduction of fixed fees for some types and sizes of development covered by the pre-application procedure have commenced.

Responses to Planning Applications

One of the complaints aimed at the Commissioners relates to the failure to provide responses to planning applications in a timely manner. The main reason for this is because some LPAs, not only Fenland District Council, add planning applications to validation lists in week four or later. Unfortunately, the Middle Level Commissioners do not have the resources to check all the lists on a weekly basis (a potential total of 64 lists per week). Therefore, to maximise the number of planning applications captured the week 4 list is normally used.

Members will be aware that neither the Middle Level Commissioners nor the Board are statutory consultees and, therefore, do not actually have to provide a response to the planning authority, and receive no external funding to do so. The main reason for supplying responses is to protect the Board's district and ensure that any byelaw consents are sought.

More timely responses would be of benefit to all parties and discussions have been held with the leading Planning Authorities including the County Council and Fenland District Council but none are prepared to contribute to funding to improve resources. The now former Head of Planning at Fenland District Council advised in a letter dated 7 December that ".....the Council is not in a position to consider providing additional resourcing". As a result, the Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer has been instructed to concentrate on responding to pre-/post-application related issues and resultant planning applications as a priority with responses to other planning applications being dealt with when time permits, with greater reliance being placed upon

our “Standing Advice”. This particular document may require further strengthening if this arrangement is to continue over the long term.

However, the Council’s letter does advise that it “will continue to encourage applicants and agents to engage directly with yourselves at pre-application stage which clearly has benefits of providing at an early stage greater certainty to developers of your requirements”. Whilst there has been an increase in enquiries concerning prior discussion these have, to date, primarily been just prior to or just following the submission of a formal planning application.

Despite the Planning Authorities’ position the Middle Level Commissioners are requested to respond to planning applications that may potentially be contentious and informal requests have been received from Fenland’s Planning Officers to reinstate the weekly surgery session that occurred between late 2009 and late 2013. However, as the Board is not a statutory consultee it is considered that whilst the comments provided by the Middle Level Commissioners on the Board’s behalf would be of benefit to the Planning Authorities in making informed decisions, this request is not followed up.

Following the decision to “stand back” from the planning process standard letters are currently being sent to applicants to remind them of their responsibilities and duties under the Land Drainage Act and associated Byelaws.

Following several years of working closely with Peterborough City Council (PCC), Fenland District Council’s planning team, from January 2016, provide a shared service to share resources and enable the delivery of an improved and more cost-effective service that will, reportedly, save Fenland £137,000 a year and a total of £446,000 by the end of the 2018/19 period.

In addition, PCC will be providing both Fenland District Council and the Borough Council with a consultancy service to meet its requirements under the Floods and Water Management Act. Whilst this will cover ‘major’ planning applications, informal concerns have been expressed within Fenland and the potential adverse impacts on meeting its “growth” targets given that much of the development is self-build and/or “minor” developments.

Planning Applications

In addition to matters concerning previous applications, the following 2 new applications have been received since the last meeting:

<i>MLC Ref.</i>	<i>Council Ref.</i>	<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Type of Development</i>	<i>Location</i>
24	F/YR14/0975/F	Mr & Mrs Hosier	Residence	Euximoor Drove, Christchurch
25	F/YR15/0416/F	Mr & Mrs Talbot	Residence	Euximoor Drove, Christchurch

From the information provided it is understood that all the developments propose to discharge surface water disposal to soakaways, or similar infiltration systems.

Fenland District Council (FDC) Neighbourhood Strategy

Responses were made to the District Council, on the Board's behalf, in respect of:

1. *Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) Draft Update October 2015 – Public Consultation*

The IDP provides support to the District Council's Policy LP13 – Supporting and Managing the Impact of a Growing District of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 and also complements its adopted SPD on Developer Contributions.

The IDP has been reviewed following the Council's decision in November 2014 not to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the time being and the Government's regulations regarding pooling restrictions for S106 contributions for new developments. All Parish and Town Councils and statutory and other providers were asked to identify their needs for the area earlier this year and these are set out in the Schedule to the IDP.

Generic responses were submitted to the Council relating to water supply (specifically water resources), waste water, Flood Risk Management Provision, Infrastructure Schedule (largely associated with the Towns) and Utilities and Flood Risk.

Following the public consultation the comments received were considered and reviewed. The subsequent "Changes made to the IDP following consultation" report was issued in early 2016.

Many of the comments submitted by the Middle Level Commissioners were advisory and, therefore, no changes were made. However, text was amended or added in the final document in respect of Utilities – both surface and waste water, Flood Risk Management Provision and potential schemes to serve southern Wisbech and the Gaul Road area in March.

The final report was considered and adopted by Full Council on 25 February.

2. *Fenland District Council (FDC) District Wide Level 2 SFRA*

Following concerns raised by local developers and agents in respect of Planning Inspectorate decisions concerning development within flood zones 2 and 3 shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Mapping, the Council is considering whether to embark on a Level 2 SFRA for the whole district, with the exception of Wisbech for which one was prepared in 2012.

The key reason for the production of a Level 2 SFRA is to allow FDC to undertake further analysis that provides an evidence base to determine the Sequential and Exception Tests across its District. It will focus on areas where there are potential development pressures in zones of medium (Flood Zone 2) to high (Flood Zone 3) flood risk and where there are no other suitable reasonably available development sites at lower flood risk after applying the Sequential Test. Completion of the Level 2 SFRA will provide the Council with the necessary level of information for a better understanding of flood risk at the local level and give better consideration of flood risk issues when making planning decisions in accordance with both National and Local planning policies.

In the absence of funding no further progress has occurred with this project.

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

***Note.** A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a document that provides further details and/or guidance with reference to policies and proposals contained in a Development Plan Document (DPD) or Local Plan.*

Further to the last meeting report, the draft Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD was the subject of a public consultation from Friday 4 September to Friday 16 October 2015.

A response to the County, in respect of the SPD, was submitted on behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners and associated Boards/Commissioners and, in addition to advising on some basic errors, identified the following:

- Like the NPPF and PPS/G25, and the associated guidance documents, the SPD is generic and does not appreciate the special circumstances of water level/flood risk management within The Fens. Therefore, it is considered that further guidance is required to assist all parties involved within the planning process of the specific issues that are different to other parts of the Country, and must be considered when making planning decisions.
- The current document is “wordy” and is likely to become ineffective. A set of guidance notes for the target audience would assist and provide a more effective “journey” for users of the document.
- The document fails to readily identify the difference between the Environment Agency and the IDBs, our differing concerns and requirements and even differences between individual IDBs. The overriding impression given is one where the role, function and governance of the IDBs appear not to be clearly understood.
- Whilst the Commissioners and associated Boards/Commissioners appreciate that the use of SuDS does have a place within water level/flood risk management, particularly the

discharge into managed watercourses, it is considered that, despite the significant emphasis placed on such facilities, the use of attenuation devices in The Fens is not always the correct or most appropriate solution. Therefore, care needs to be taken to ensure that resources and funds are not wasted by seeking to impose attenuation solutions when a direct discharge is acceptable to the local drainage authorities.

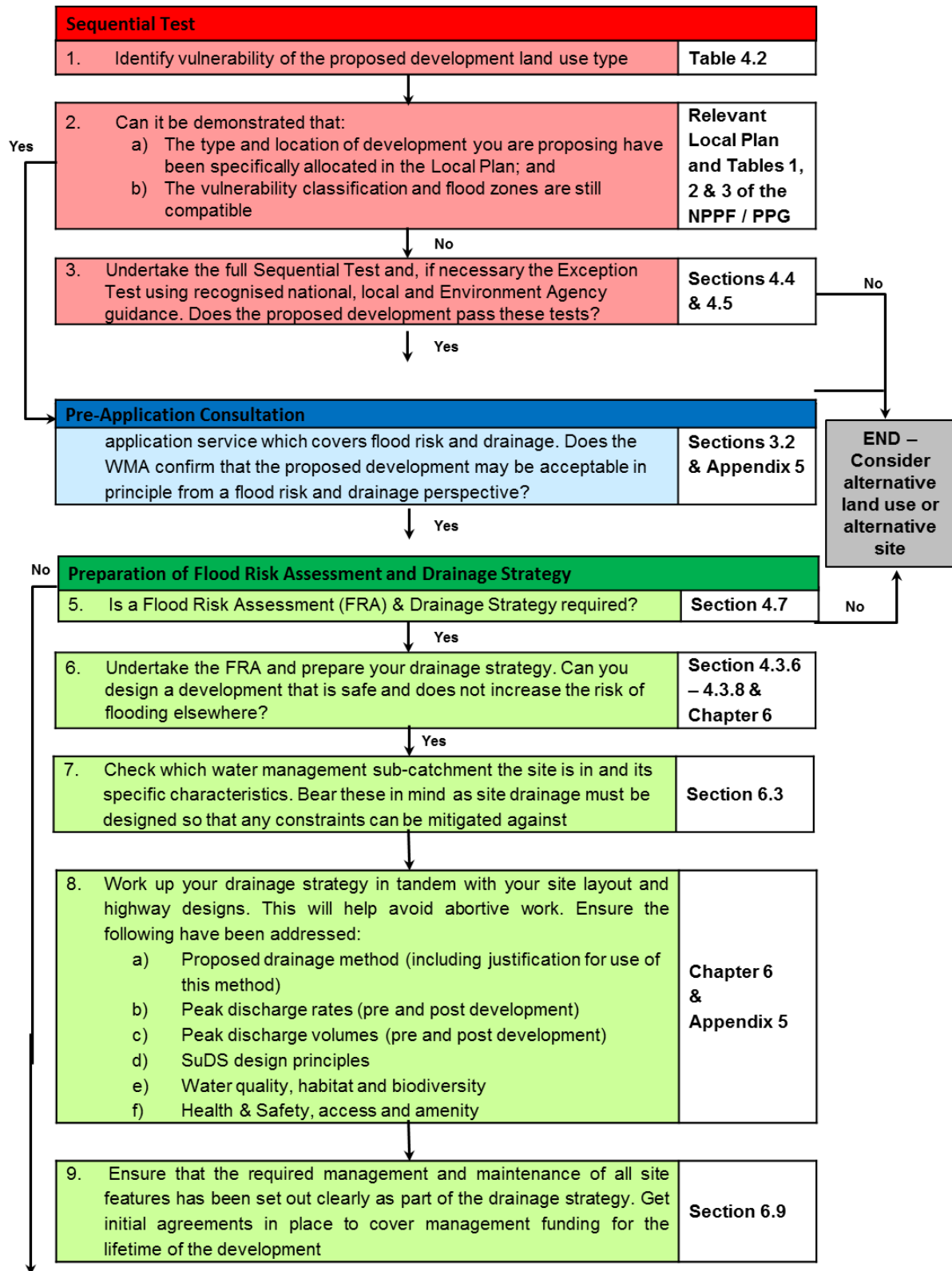
- The water resource issues raised predominantly refer solely to potable water supply but other water resource issues which exist within the study area, for example, agricultural use, navigation, amenity, biodiversity, were not fully considered, particularly if drought conditions, like those recently experienced, become more regular, and if the impact of climate change becomes a reality.

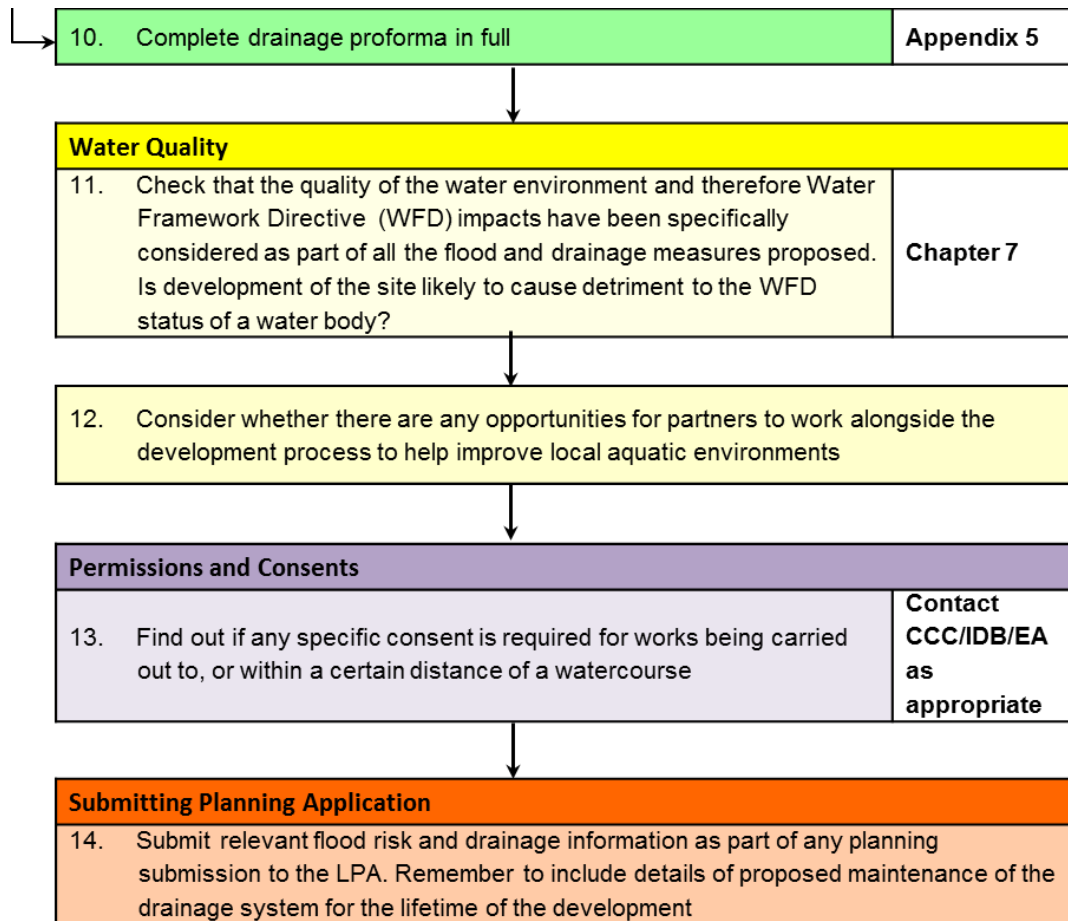
The response advised that IDBs may therefore not be able to accept the principles and policies which accommodate a County wide “broad brush” approach, which are not consistent with the more detailed requirements of their local areas, and went on to advise that:

- a. In the flood risk areas managed by IDBs, development proposals are too often granted subject to planning conditions to allow LPAs to reach their targets, without sufficient regard to IDB comments on flood risk.
- b. LPAs receive fees for dealing with planning applications, IDBs do not; unless the developer chooses to follow an IDB pre-application procedure. Too often our advice is ignored and we are expected to provide a subsidised service for planning authorities to enable them to meet their targets, which the Boards/Commissioners are not prepared to do.
- c. We wish to encourage LPAs to, in turn, encourage developers to adopt the pre-application procedure. In the absence of the developer doing so, we can give no guarantee that, under the present arrangements, we will be able to respond to the Council’s request for advice on flood risk.
- d. When dealing with issues related to our byelaws and consent procedures the Middle Level Commissioners and associated/administered Boards/Commissioners will promote and require continued adoption of and compliance with the relevant principles contained within PPS25 and the associated Practice Guide together with the provision of a FRA that meets their own requirements ie detailed assessments on the impacts on the respective water level/flood risk management systems and the provision of adequate evidence to prove that a viable scheme for appropriate water level/flood risk management exists, and that it could be constructed and maintained for the lifetime of the development.

The responses received during the consultation were analysed and reviewed and a Steering Group meeting held in December to discuss the main issues raised.

Following the meeting a flow chart illustrating the process that it is considered that developers will need to complete when making a planning application was produced. This flow chart is considered to be overcomplicated but more importantly from the Commissioners' perspective the first contact with the RMA, that is likely to receive the discharge concerned, is in step 13 just prior to the submission of the planning application. The refusal by the Board/Commissioners to issue consent for either byelaw or discharge can, in the correct circumstances, be an obstacle to further progress. In addition, some of the answers required to complete steps 5-10 will require the RMAs involvement. Therefore, in order to ensure that the Board/Commissioners are involved at an early stage it is considered that any initial consultation with an RMA should be at least at step 4.





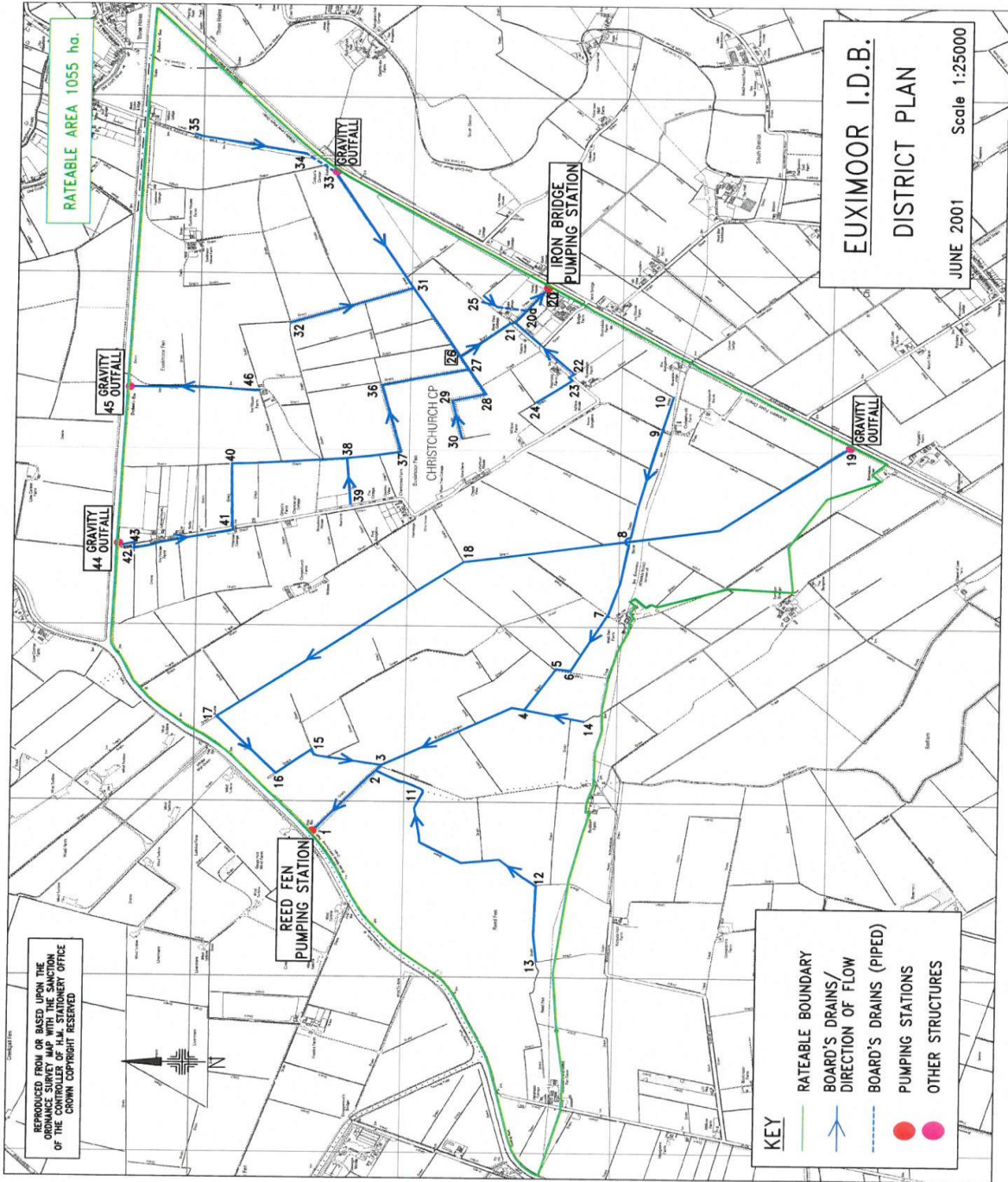
Sections of a revised draft document have been issued to the Steering Group for further consideration and comment and these are currently being considered.

In respect of SuDS the content disappointingly conforms to the generic contents of the NPPF rather than realising that this does not accommodate the special circumstances that occur within the Fenland situation.

In addition, emphasis is made to reducing flood risk but fails to consider other issues such as viability, sustainability, carbon footprint, land use, water resources etc all of which should also be considered. Failure to do so could have adverse impacts and actually reduce “growth” in the area.

The County Council currently hopes that the SPD will go before the County Committee on 9 June and subsequently be adopted by each of the Cambridgeshire local planning authorities.

Both the Middle Level Commissioners’ Planning Engineer and Assistant Engineer have and will continue to represent both the Middle Level Commissioners’ and associated Boards’/Commissioners’ interests by attending meetings and considering the various draft documents.



[Handwritten Signature]
 Consulting Engineer

23 May 2016

Euximoor (309)\Reports\May 2016

Miss Ablett reported that the outfall structure on the Sixteen Foot River was still seized in the open position and enquired whether any action had been taken by the Board. The Chairman advised that as the disused outfall at Cottons Corner had not been causing any problems during the year it had not yet been blocked off. However, once the crops had been harvested, and if any earth or clay were close to hand, the work would be carried out in the coming year.

Miss Ablett reported that the grab on the weedscreen cleaner at Reed Fen Pumping Station had been damaged due to contact having been made with the dam board. As this was so close to the grab the Consulting Engineer had recommended that the Board give consideration to removing the remaining dam boards to avoid it happening again.

Mr Albutt advised that there were no dam boards at this location and that the grab had been damaged by the steel grating on the galvanised iron screen. Messrs Sutton and Yeulett both requested clarification from the Consulting Engineers regarding the confusion surrounding the dam boards.

Mr Albutt reported that when the weedscreen cleaner stopped working, although the alarm was triggered, the problem had not been attended to for some time as there was no means of communicating there being a problem from the pumping station to the pump attendant. He enquired whether, although the weedscreen cleaner had been installed more for health and safety reasons than for the need to clear any weed, the Board considered a device should be fitted which would notify the pump attendant when a breakdown occurred.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.
- ii) That Reed Fen Pumping station continued to be monitored and the Consulting Engineers be requested to clarify the confusion surrounding the dam boards.
- iii) That the Chairman be authorised to carry out any works at Cottons Corner as and when he feels it is necessary.
- iv) That the Consulting Engineers obtain quotes regarding the cost of a device that would warn the Pump Attendant should the weedscreen cleaner fail.

(NB) - Mr Sutton declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of Fenland District Council.

B.881 Capital Improvement Programme

Members considered the Board's future capital improvement programme.

RESOLVED

That the Capital Programme be approved in principle and kept under review.

B.882 District Officer's Report

The District Officer reported that the pumping stations were in reasonable order albeit in need of decoration, especially the doors and soffits.

He advised that there had been a slip at Point 7 and, although not holding up the flow of water too much, this would require attending to in the coming year and suggested this be carried out when the machine was in the area.

With regards to drainworks in the coming year the District Officer recommended that slubbing works continue, as required.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved and that the Officer be thanked for his services over the preceding year.
- ii) That the Chairman be authorised to take such action as he considers to be appropriate with regards to the decoration of the pumping stations.

B.883 Environmental Officer's Press Releases and BAP Report

Miss Ablett referred to the Environmental Officer's Press Releases dated December 2015 and April 2016, previously circulated to Members.

Members considered and approved the most recent BAP report.

B.884 District Officer's Fee and Pumping Station duties

- a) Further to minute B.858(c), Miss Ablett reported that Messrs Russell and Smart had duly signed the agreements.
- b) The Board gave consideration to the District Officer's fee for 2016/2017.
- c) The Board gave consideration to the payment in respect of pumping station duties for 2016/2017.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Board agree that the sum of £1,200 be allowed for the services of the District Officer for 2016/2017.
- ii) That the Board agree that the sum of £700 (£17.50 per visit) be allowed for the provision of pumping station duties for 2016/2017.

(NB) – The Chairman declared a financial interest when this item was discussed.

B.885 State-aided Schemes

Consideration was given to the desirability of undertaking further State-aided Schemes in the District and whether any future proposals should be included in the capital forecasts provided to the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED

That no proposals be formulated at the present time.

B.886 Environment Agency – Precept

a) Miss Ablett reported that the precept for 2016/2017 would remain unchanged at £3,473.

b) Local Choices Update

Further to minute B.860, Miss Ablett referred to the Environment Agency's newsletter dated April 2016 and reported that because of the appeals against the precept lodged some two years ago by the Board (and other Boards) the Agency had introduced a Local Choices Precept Programme which involved a far greater input from IDBs and IDBs being much more able to influence the Agency on the works on which the precept would be spent.

Miss Ablett updated Members on the recent Environment Agency/IDB Strategic Meeting.

B.887 Association of Drainage Authorities

Miss Ablett reported:-

a) Annual Conference

That the Annual Conference of the Association of Drainage Authorities would be held in London on Thursday the 17th November 2016.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a ticket for the Annual Conference of the Association if a Member wishes to attend.

b) Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse Branch

On the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association held in Prickwillow, Ely on Tuesday the 8th March 2016.

c) Subscriptions

That it was proposed by ADA to increase subscriptions by approximately 5% in 2016, viz:- from £510 to £536.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription be paid for 2016

(NB) – Mr Heading declared an interest (as a member of the ADA Board) when this item was discussed.

B.888 Health and Safety Audits

Miss Ablett reminded the Board of their need to ensure that working practices were safe, particularly around the pumping stations and reminded the Board of the arrangements with Croner.

B.889 Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Partnership Update

Further to minute B.863, Miss Ablett reported that the main recent items discussed were the County Council's project to install more rain gauges in Cambridgeshire; the impact of the A14 Project; Surface Water Management Plans and the new Supplementary Planning Document on flood risk, which the Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer was involved with. Miss Ablett advised that the Planning Engineer did not feel that this document was yet in a suitable state commenting in particular, that it was too generic, did not really apply to the special needs of the Fens or properly set out the roles and functions of IDBs

B.890 Information Regarding Asbestos

Miss Ablett reported that the Board had a duty to provide details of any asbestos in their installations, especially pumping stations, to be recorded in a Register so that these were known and any contractors could be made aware.

RESOLVED

That the Register record no asbestos present.

B.891 Banking Arrangements

a) Changes to the bank mandate

Miss Ablett reported that, due to the Clerk's impending retirement relevant changes to bank mandates to name his successor would be required in due course.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Board's bank mandates.

b) Changes to the National Savings Accounts signatories

Miss Ablett reported that it was necessary to update the signatories on the National Savings Accounts.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman and the Clerk be the authorised signatories on the National Savings Accounts.

B.892 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2014/2015

a) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2015.

b) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2015.

B.893 Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England

Miss Ablett referred to the recently issued Practitioners' guide to proper practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory Annual Accounts and Governance Statements which will apply to Annual Returns commencing on or after 1st April 2016.

B.894 Budgeting

Miss Ablett referred to the budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2016.

B.895 Review of Internal Controls

Members considered and expressed satisfaction with the current system of Internal Controls.

B.896 Risk Management Assessment

- a) The Board considered their current Risk Management system.

Miss Ablett reported that the Board had in place a Risk Management Policy which was last reviewed in 2015.

She reported that the Board had in place operational, financial and governance policies and considered all of their key risks and how to mitigate against them at each scheduled meeting, at which operational and environmental risks were discussed, based upon engineer's reports, officer reports, budgets and costings covering the short/medium and longer term issues. Budgets were prepared and approved by the Board.

Miss Ablett reported that insurances were in place that confirmed the cover was appropriate to the business. Budgets/year-end forecasts were reviewed at intervals by the Board. This was deemed adequate for the size of the business and the District system was monitored on a regular basis to identify new/emerging areas of risk.

The Board considered this current policy/strategy to be appropriate in between carrying out more substantial, periodic formalised reviews of risk assessment/management and met the requirements that they were assessed by.

- b) The Board reviewed and approved the insured value of their buildings.

B.897 Appointment of the External Auditor

Miss Ablett reported that, as had been previously mentioned, the recent Local Audit and Accountability Act changes the audit requirements for smaller public bodies including IDBs and such bodies as the MLC and Parish Councils.

The Act abolished the Audit Commission from 1st April 2015 and, from that date, responsibility for external auditor appointments has transferred to a new body, Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. Most contracts with existing external auditors will however continue until they expire after completion of the 2016/2017 audits.

Miss Ablett reported that from April 2017, smaller authorities will also be legally responsible for the appointment of their own external auditor and that this appointment must be made before the 31st December before the audited year, eg by 31/12/2016 for 2017/2018. Miss Ablett advised that the Secretary of State can however, appoint a body with power to appoint auditors for such smaller bodies which must then opt out from an appointing body. This has now been proposed, with a body proposed to procure audit services "en bloc" for these bodies. The new body is also supported and being funded by DCLG. The new arrangements will operate for a period of 5 years initially but is likely to run on 5 year cycles. It is likely that the procedures for opting out of this sector led body arrangement and appointing an external auditor individually will not be worthwhile for smaller authorities since this will involve the authority establishing an auditor panel and following a statutory appointment process and it is also likely that audit fees will be higher than under the "en bloc" arrangement.

Miss Ablett advised that all IDBs had to decide by 31st January 2016 whether they were going to opt out of the new sector body arrangements and that the position can be reviewed during the first five year cycle. The Chairman had, in view of this, agreed that the Board would opt in to the Sector Led body.

RESOLVED

That the Board approve the actions of the Chairman to join the Sector Led Auditor Appointment body.

B.898 Exercise of Public Rights

Miss Ablett referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

B.899 Annual Governance Statement – 2015/2016

The Board considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended on the 31st March 2016.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement, on behalf of the Board, for the financial year ending 31st March 2016.

B.900 Payments 2015/2016

The Board considered and approved payments amounting to £27,167.57 which had been made during the financial year 2015/2016.

(NB) – The Chairman and Mr P Russell declared an interest in the payment made to Russell and Sons Ltd.

(NB) – Messrs Heading and Sutton declared an interest (as Members of the Middle Level Board) in the payments made to the Middle Level Commissioners.

B.901 Annual Accounts of the Board – 2015/2016

The Board considered and approved the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2016 as required in the Audit Regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Return, on behalf of the Board, for the financial year ending 31st March 2016.

B.902 Expenditure estimates and special levy and drainage rate requirements 2016/2017

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2016/2017 and were informed by Miss Ablett that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 92.60% and 7.40%.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That the surplus raised in 2015/2016 be transferred to the Capital Reserve Fund.
- iii) That a total sum of £36,728 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
- iv) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £34,009 and £2,719 respectively.
- v) That a rate of 21.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.
- vi) That a Special levy of £2,719 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- vii) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levy referred to in resolution (v).
- viii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.903 Display of rate notice

RESOLVED

That notice of the rate be affixed within the District in accordance with Section 48(3)(a) of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

B.904 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That the next Meeting of the Board be held on Wednesday the 7th June 2017.

