

MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS

Report of the Middle Level Board on the financial year 2016/17 for submission to the General Meeting of the Commissioners to be held on 2 November 2017

MEMBERS OF THE MIDDLE LEVEL BOARD – 2016/17

(year in which first elected in brackets)

MARC HEADING Middlefield, Stocking Drove, Chatteris (Chairman) (2004)
JONATHAN BROWN Grange Farm, Benwick, March (Vice-Chairman) (2006)
PATRICK ALLPRESS Hollyhouse Farm, Horseway, Chatteris (2011)
GREGORY BLISS Ermine Lodge, Stilton, Peterborough (2011)
DUNCAN BOUGHTON Fields End House, Doddington (1985)
ROBERT BROWN Wypemere Farm, Benwick Road, Whittlesey (2013)
THE LORD DE RAMSEY The Estate Office, Grange Farm, Abbots Ripton (1980)
DAVID FOUNTAIN Delavels Farm, 352 Benwick Road, Whittlesey (1992)
FRED HARTLEY Bexwell Hall, Bexwell, Downham Market (2004)
JOHN HEADING Denegates, 60 London Road, Chatteris (1991)
MATHEW LATTA Tubbs Farm, Sutton Gault, Sutton (2012)
SAM RABY Grange Farm, Woodwalton Lane, Woodwalton, Sawtry (1991)
PAUL WEST Laddus Farm, March Riverside, Upwell (2012)
HUGH WHITTOME The Farmhouse, Tick Fen Farm, Puddock Road, Warboys (2002)
STEPHEN WHITTOME 96 Hollow Lane, Ramsey (1989)

ROY GROOM 'Maryland', 40 St. Paul's Road, Walton Highway
(representing the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

GAVIN BOOTH 3 John Bends Way, Parsons Drove, Wisbech
(representing Fenland District Council under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

STEVE GARRATT 42 Church Street, Whittlesey, Peterborough
(representing Fenland District Council under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

WILL SUTTON Illizarov Lodge, Padgetts Road, Christchurch
(representing Fenland District Council under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

GRAHAM BULL 2 Lancaster Close, Old Hurst, Huntingdon
(representing Huntingdonshire District Council under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

PETER MITCHELL 1 Walnut Way, Stilton, Peterborough
(representing Huntingdonshire District Council under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991)

OFFICERS :

Clerk and Chief Executive to the Commissioners - I.A.Smith, BA Solicitor (to 31st December 2016)

Chief Engineer to the Commissioners – D Thomas B.Eng, M.C.M.I.

Clerk and Chief Executive to the Commissioners - D Thomas (from 1st January 2017)

Solicitor and Assistant Clerk – Ms L McShane

ACCOUNTS IN RESPECT OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2016/17

The Commissioners' revenue balance on 31st March 2016 was £4,189,386.28 and during the year was increased by £13,586.43 to £4,202,972.71.

The sum of £232,546.38 was received from the Environment Agency (EA), being the standard annual calculated contribution in respect of highland water contributions for maintenance works.

The precept paid to the EA amounted to £1,756.00 compared with £1,756.00 in 2015/16.

The Commissioners have borrowed £11 million from the Public Works Loan Board for the St Germans Pumping Station replacement scheme and the balance outstanding at 23rd March 2017 was £9,160,436.35. A loan of £1.75 million has also been taken with the Public Works Loan Board for the office/depot relocation to Whittlesey Road, March. The balance outstanding on this loan at 23rd December 2016 was £1,292,724.83.

Development contributions were received in respect of all development which would give rise to an increase in the rate or volume of surface water discharge to maintained watercourses within the catchment.

There are no unusual features in the Navigation and Adventurers' Accounts.

MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

The attendances of most of the Members of the Board have been excellent as usual.

ETHNIC MONITORING

The Commissioners' workforce is ethnically classed as white European.

During the year two members of staff retired.

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REPORT AS PRESENTED TO THE BOARD AT THE APRIL 2017 MEETING

Health & Safety

Croner Consulting – continue to provide the MLC and associated IDBs with help and advice of Health and Safety issues.

Meetings regarding IDB Health and Safety were held on 18th April, 20th and 24th June and 11th November 2016. A further visit is planned for 18th April 2017.

Information packs on basic H&S requirements, including template risk assessments, have been sent out to IDBs administered by the Commissioners for their information and use.

The visit planned for April is to review and update all the Commissioners own risk assessments, to ensure they are fully compliant and up to date.

A neighbouring IDB has recently had an occurrence in which a dog ended up trapped between a weedscreen and a pump. This happened at an unmanned pumping station. The dog's owner entered the pump intake area to secure the rescue of the dog and it was fortuitous that an automated pump start did not occur. However, this is perhaps an opportune reminder that members of the general public and even the emergency services are not necessarily aware of the risks posed at such installations. We are accordingly reviewing signage and security at our FRM asset sites.

Clerk's Report

Defra and EA Visits – on 6th May 2016 Sarah Hendry, Director of Water and Flood Risk Management at Defra, visited the Middle Level. After an initial discussion at the office where we outlined the history and water level management practices within the area and the role of the MLC and IDBs and referred to the proposed water abstraction licensing changes, she was taken on a tour encompassing St Germans Pumping Station and the Great Fen by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chief Engineer.

On 16th August 2016 the Environment Agency's (EA) Director of Flood and Coastal Risk Management, John Curtin, visited the Great Fen in August and met with, inter alia, the Chairman, Vice Chairman, the Chief Engineer and the Clerk, before again going on to St Germans.

Anglian Water Issues – the position with Anglian Water remains unchanged with the present spirit of co-operation continuing. We carry on gradually receiving monies from developers in respect of the discharge of treated sewage effluent flows to our system but do from time to time need to remind Anglian Water of what has been agreed.

IDB Review and Associated Legal Developments – we have continued our partnership working with Cambridgeshire and Norfolk County Councils and Peterborough City Council in their role as a Lead Local Flood Authority. Cambridgeshire County Council have produced their own Supplementary Planning Document relating to flood risk but our Planning Engineer, Graham Moore, considers that it does not in its present form provide adequate reference to or consideration of the special issues within the Fens.

While it appears that the proposed agreement regarding closer tie ups and working and governance arrangements between Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Essex and Suffolk County Councils and Peterborough City Council, together with a number of local District Councils, referred to in my April report, will not proceed the Board will be aware of other 'devolution proposals' which are being considered and, if implemented, their effect on our functions may need to be assessed.

Steps have also been taken to align the boundaries of the EA and Natural England in this area, meaning that the Agency's present Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Area, the former Central Area, combines with the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex Area (the former Eastern Area) to form the East Anglian Area. We will be watching carefully to see how these two proposals will impact on MLC/IDB functions. The Area Manager for this new Area is Charlie Beardsall, formerly Area Manager of the Norfolk Suffolk and Essex Area, with the former Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Manager, Julie Foley, moving to become Area Manager of the Kent and South London Area.

Following the appointment of Theresa May as Prime Minister, there have also been changes at Defra, with Andrea Leadsom succeeding Elizabeth Truss as Secretary of State and Therese Coffey replacing Rory Stewart as Under Secretary.

Appointment of Chief Executive – following open advertisement and a competitive process, the MLC Chief Engineer, David Thomas, was appointed as the new Chief Executive and took over from Iain Smith on the 1st January 2017.

This appointment required some reorganisation of the MLC staffing in consequence which has now been completed. This included the creation of a new post to support the Chief Executive, particularly in relation to his Clerking roles, and an advert for Solicitor/Assistant Clerk was placed in appropriate places. This led to the appointment of Lorna McShane who took up post on the 1st December 2016. Lorna is settling in well and embracing her new role in the world of flood risk management and navigation.

As the new Chief Executive retained the position of Chief Engineer and is responsible for internally signing off and authorising the large majority of invoices, whether paid by MLC themselves or on behalf of an IDB and a significant number of IDB invoices, the Internal Auditor, Mark Hayden of Whitings, advised that he should not therefore be named on the bank account as a payer and

recommended that, for this purpose, Robert Hill and Sam Ablett be named on the mandate. The Board resolved to change the bank mandate accordingly and also to change the National Savings.

Potential Changes in Rating Valuation – The Board was made aware at the November 2016 meeting of consideration being given by ADA and Defra to possible changes in the way in which drainage rates and special levies may be calculated in future. The present system, under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Internal Drainage Board (Finance) Regulations provides for agricultural property to be valued at a notional rental value for that property as at 1st April 1988 with non-agricultural hereditaments being valued at the “average acre” rate, calculated by reference to pre-1988 development within the District of the individual Board. The current legislation does however require that properties that existed before 1st April 1988 are valued according to their old rateable values, records for which may no longer exist and this causes problems for IDBs which are looking to extend their boundaries and particularly where there are proposals to create new IDBs. It is understood however, that, at present, Defra is unlikely to progress the issue urgently and that some further consideration will have to take place before any change is proposed. In addition, as a change to primary legislation would be required, Parliamentary time would have to be found for this which might be difficult in the short term following the triggering of Article 50 as part of the Brexit process.

National Audit Office Review – the National Audit Office has issued a report on Internal Drainage Boards. The production of this report seems to follow correspondence with the Audit Office from someone who has an issue with an IDB, the correspondence content and IDB in question are unknown. The report states its aims as, dealing with concerns over governance; oversight; complaints procedures and conflicts of interest. It is strange therefore that the report appears to cover arrangements for environmental representation as well.

ADA was made aware that a report was in production and was given the chance to comment upon a draft of it. It appears to be the case that quite a number of ADA's comments have been overlooked in the final report; accordingly, ADA has responded to the published report. Whilst the report makes a number of observations and comments on a range of issues, it does not draw any conclusions, make recommendations or prescribe an action plan. That being said the content of the report does need careful review to see whether there are further specific improvements our Boards should make to our governance arrangements and with this in mind we have first reviewed the arrangements for all MLC administered IDBs and have found that the policies and procedures that have been recommended by ADA and referred to within this report are already in place.

National Flood Resilience Review – the Government published this Review in September 2016 and the response from ADA highlighted the need for appropriate and adequate maintenance to ensure that work is carried out by sufficient and properly qualified persons and at the correct local level.

The previous Secretary of State for the Environment, Liz Truss, favoured devolving tasks to IDBs and it is hoped that, where appropriate, Defra will continue with this policy.

It was noticeable, however, that the Review did not deal with the issue of ensuring the proper maintenance of surface water attenuation facilities, caused by the decision of the Government not to implement the relevant provisions of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would have made the County Council responsible for the majority of such features.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) – the Anglian River Basin Liaison Panel met once in the period, on 30th June 2016 and discussed the proposed Defra 25 year Work Plan, the update on the Environment Programme and a review of Panel membership. A presentation from Steve Muncaster of Anglian Water was also received on "Water Resources East", a project intended to inform future priorities for long term strategic water resource planning. The Panel is now however being disbanded as it is felt that there are other partnerships in place capable of delivering what is needed.

It is important to note that the River Basin Management Plan, which was approved by Ministers early in 2016, is a “high level” document and does not contain the list of local “measures” which

appeared in the many schedules to the 2009 Plan. This leaves the relevant measures to be discussed/settled 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, and Cliff Carson is a member of the Group which is continuing to look at reasonable mitigation measures for such bodies. Such local work appears slow however and it is already apparent that other considerations and consultations, the Water Transfer Licensing issue being one case in point, are taking place separately.

Committees – the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) met on 14th July and 18th November 2016 to discuss issues relating to operational navigation authorities; in particular the proposals by Defra relating to the ending of water transfer exemptions and issues surrounding safety and sub-rental of residential boats were covered.

The Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Peterborough Flood Risk Management/Water Management Partnerships have continued to meet regularly throughout the period and have discussed matters such as incidents of flooding within the Counties/City, proposals for dealing with "wetspots" within certain urban areas through surface water management plans, with a reference to Grant-in-Aid (GiA) applications; Local Levy funding for projects, interestingly including a rain gauge project, which may enable us to revisit the possibility for a project to improve telemetry; the Eel and Fish Regulations; surface water management plans; issues arising with the closure of roads due to flooding and the way in which the Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk County Councils and Peterborough City Council were dealing with the proposed implementation of the SuDS regime. A major topic for Cambridgeshire has also been the A14 road improvement proposals which potentially affect one of our administered IDBs, Swavesey. The Norfolk Group is also continuing to consider whether an arrangement for the creation of a River Authority such as that proposed for Somerset and overseen by the County Councils would be appropriate for Norfolk and have set up a Working Group to consider this further. We have not yet been consulted on any proposals but this would not seem a suitable or necessary development for this area or the MLC locality.

The MLC have representation on the newly created Ouse Washes Strategic Group, which is looking strategically at the Ouse Washes and surrounding area and the Old Bedford/Middle Level Water Care Partnership, run by Cambridgeshire ACRE, which has been established under the WFD and will review issues which may be relevant to the River Basin Management Plan. They are currently looking at water quality issues in Ramsey as well as issues relating to the Ouse Washes.

Commissioners'/Boards' meeting dates and Forward Look – we received correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (KLWN) regarding the Commissioners' and Boards' meeting dates and the setting of drainage rates and special levies. The background to this is that, strictly, under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991, rates and Special Levies should be set by 15th February but that, because of the number of Boards administered from this office, it would be difficult to do so with anything approaching accurate estimates and IDB costs would rise as most would require additional meetings. This issue therefore applies as much to the administered IDBs as to the MLC.

When this legislation came in therefore, we agreed with the Councils in this area that there would be no change in the dates of the MLC and IDB meetings.

The KLWN concern seems to relate to the need to have accurate financial information and to projected reductions in or the removal of the reimbursement by Government of the special levy. This reimbursement, originally 100%, has declined over the years and may be removed as Government considers revisions in local authority financing. The Commissioners' meeting dates are, to a certain extent, set by statute and as we have always alerted the Councils to potential schemes which would be likely to lead to a rate/levy increase, most recently the St Germans Pumping Station, I do not see quite what difference simply changing the meeting dates would make, since the reason for it seems to be based on the financial difficulties of the Council. Certainly such a move is not currently supported by the IDBs and interestingly, when the issue was raised at some IDB meetings earlier this year, the Borough's own representatives on the IDBs did not support a change for the reasons mentioned.

The Chief Engineer, in his role as Chief Executive (Designate), attended a training session organised by the Borough for its members appointed to IDBs and the main concern voiced by the Council then was that IDB special levies were not classed as "precepts" and thereby taken out of the calculation of Council spending. When the present rating system was established, it was suggested that IDB levies were indeed classed as precepts but Government at the time decided that IDBs became "levying bodies" rather than "precepting bodies". KLWN did ask whether we or ADA would support a response to the recent Government consultation on Business Rates again asking that IDBs became precepting bodies. While this approach has been favoured by Kings Lynn IDB, I have discussed the issue with the EA's Head of Finance, Phil Winrow, and it would appear that, if IDBs became precepting bodies at present, we would be ourselves subject to a 2% cap! I have therefore indicated to ADA that we would not at present support such a move unless this capping element was removed.

As the Board will, of course, be aware, we are considering the prospective bank raising scheme at the present time and it may well be that this will lead to an increase in the rates/levies, although this will depend on the final costs and scheme chosen and the availability of high levels of Defra/EA GiA.

As agreed the past Chief Executive wrote to Fenland, Huntingdonshire and KLWN after the November meeting giving them an up to date position on this scheme and advising them that there is no intention to increase rates at this time (for this scheme) in advance of EA scheme business case approval.

Consultations – the MLC continued to respond to the Defra consultations either directly or through correspondence with ADA as and when appropriate to do so. These have recently included the proposed ending of water transfer exemptions and have also responded to ADA on the proposed revisions in business rates, so far as the special levies might be affected.

Review of Water Abstraction Licensing – as was previously reported, Defra had again published proposals for bringing into force the changes to the water abstraction licensing system, which were outlined and enacted in the Water Act 2003 and in relation to which successive proposed implementation dates had come and gone.

The Board was reminded that these revisions to water abstraction law proposed to bring within abstraction licensing, for the first time, a number of operations by which water is abstracted but which are exempt from control under existing legislation. Most significant amongst these for the MLC is the requirement that abstractions simply transferring water from one watercourse to another by IDBs and Navigation Authorities become subject to licensing. The issue is not however straight forward since it first needs to be assessed whether a legal 'transfer' is taking place. The EA has previously published, and is revising, draft handbooks showing examples of where it considers that a Transfer Licence will/will not be required but the position will need to be reviewed again when the final Government decision is known.

The consultation itself ran until 8th April 2016 and, as previously reported, the previous Chief Executive had responded on it on behalf of MLC and our administered IDBs. A copy of our response was included in the last April Board meeting.

Since the closure of the consultation, discussions have continued to be held by ADA and the AINA with representatives of Defra and the EA, seeking to ensure that sensible and workable proposals are produced. The EA, however, conducted an exercise aimed at showing that IDBs could afford to pay the proposed £1500 Transfer Licence application fee, rather than seeking to justify the imposition of Transfer Licences themselves, which was a most disappointing approach. As this report was being completed, Defra published the responses to the consultation exercise and declared that they intended to make an announcement on policy in early 2017. Innes Thompson, the ADA Chief Executive, has asked to meet with myself and Sarah Hendry (Director of Floods and Water, Defra) to discuss Defra's thinking on Water Abstraction and Transfer licencing. Sarah has agreed to this and has promised to offer some date options accordingly.

Navigation Bill

Proposed MLC revision of legislation

Following the receipt of formal opinion from Defra that it considered that a Transport and Works Act Order would not be appropriate to confer all the provisions sought by the Commissioners especially those relating to charging, and consideration of that opinion by Parliamentary Counsel, it was confirmed that Parliamentary Counsel had authorised the Commissioners to proceed by way of Private Bill. The Middle Level Navigation Bill (referred to officially as the Middle Level Bill) was duly presented to Parliament prior to Christmas and began its passage in the House of Commons. This is helpful in the sense that the Commons is, for this type of measure, the more difficult House, where objections are likely to be raised. Our local MPs were alerted to the Bill's introduction and asked to give the measure their support.

The period from the introduction of the Bill until the end of January constituted the formal objection period during which the proposal to promote the Bill is formally advertised and there is the opportunity for anyone opposing the measure to petition Parliament by way of objection.

By the time this period closed, the Bill had unfortunately received 6 petitions of objection. It will therefore now have to proceed through the Parliamentary procedure applicable to opposed Bills.

Having said that, however, the petitions are, to a very large extent, identical in their wording and their objections seem to have originated from the same source, the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA), which objected to the proposals during the consultation period. A number of their assertions are speculative and subjective and a number relate to the proposed byelaws which are not being sought at present. The NBTA petition is provided to the Board so that they may be aware of the nature of the objections made which, as I have mentioned, have a very common theme. Among the petitioners is the March Cruising Club which has claimed that it was not consulted by the MLC. The Club was in fact sent the consultation letter in February 2016 and did not respond. They have also not contacted the Commissioners since objecting, although we are aware that they did invite one of the other objectors to address their recent meeting. The fact that their objection refers to a large extent to the effect on boat dwellers perhaps underlines the common nature of the responses.

The Bill was initially scheduled for its second reading on 1st February but was objected to by some MPs. This was, however, primarily because some MPs consider that all Private Bills should be debated and object on principle to them proceeding without debate. We were advised by our Parliamentary Agents that this was likely.

The formal second reading debate was held on 29th March. The Bill was proposed by Kevin Foster, the MP for Torbay. This was primarily because neither Elizabeth Truss nor Stephen Barclay, as members of the Government, are allowed to propose Private Bills and Shailesh Vara was unable to attend the debate. It was noticeable that two MPs in particular, Christopher Chope (Christchurch) and Stewart Jackson (Peterborough), spoke in support of the contentions made by the petitioners. This was disappointing particularly in the case of Mr Jackson, since his office had contacted the Commissioners prior to the debate and been advised of the Commissioners' position and that we did not accept the accuracy of the petitioners' claims. However, a number of MPs also spoke in support of the measure, which was eventually passed at second reading stage without a division.

The Bill will now go through the Parliamentary procedure applicable to opposed Bills and will therefore be considered, at a date to be decided, by the Opposed Bills Committee. Prior to that time we will be making arrangements to meet with and formally respond to the petitioners.

We are also meeting with our Parliamentary Agents, Nick Evans of Bircham Dyson Bell, on 26th April and an update on the matter following this meeting will be reported verbally to the Board.

Staff

One of our Finance Officers, Carly Russell, went on maternity leave in July 2016 and, as previously reported, one of our Part Time Secretarial/Clerical Assistants, Marion Eady, who has some previous experience of finance, is covering for Carly during her absence. We have obtained temporary cover for Marion's normal role. Carly has opted to extend her maternity leave to her full legal entitlement and hence is now due back in August.

Childcare Voucher Scheme – at the November meeting the Board resolved to introduce a Childcare Voucher Scheme. The basis of this Government approved Scheme is that the employee can sacrifice some of his/her salary in return for childcare vouchers, up to the maximum amount allowed by Government, currently £243 per month. The benefit to the MLC is that, although a fee would be payable for these vouchers, there is NO employers' NIC or pension contribution payable on them, leading to an overall saving.

Staff Appraisals – appraisals have been carried out for all staff and this is perhaps the first time this has happened across the organisation. The actions from these appraisals will be collated over the coming month and what has been learnt used to inform the future development of and maximising of the staff resource at the MLC. Staff meetings are also planned, the first of which will take place on the 25th April.

Vacancies/Appointments/Departures – an advertisement for an operative to bring the workforce back up to full strength has been placed in a local paper and on the ADA website and it is expected to make an appointment early in late April or early May.

Pensions – the LGSS Pensions Service Team have written advising that the cost of providing pension benefits is dependent on many uncertain factors including the investment performance of the Fund's assets. To reflect the uncertainty, employer contribution rates have been set by modelling the contributions required to fund the benefits under 5000 different economic scenarios. The likelihood that the 2016 Valuation Contribution Rate will pay for both benefits accruing and return the employer to a fully funded position over a period of 15 years is targeted to be at least 75%. The employer's contribution rate for 2017/18 has been set at 33.4%, this includes 10.2% towards filling the current deficit. The employer's contribution towards those in a NEST scheme remains unaltered.

Applications for Spine Point Advancement – Applications have been received from six people and these will be reviewed at the Executive meeting and reported on at the meeting.

Sickness

Staff – of a total staff of 22, with an approximate expected maximum of 4823 man days over the twelve month reporting period (due to members of staff being employed for part of the period only), 11 members had 78 days sick leave and, as reported previously, one member of staff has been on maternity leave during the reporting period. The long-term leave is broken down as 29 days following a hip operation, 16 days following a knee investigation and the shorter term leave is broken down as 9.5 days, 2 with 6 days, 4.5 days, 2 with 2 days and 3 with 1 day, 10 members of staff did not take any time off for sickness.

Operatives – during the twelve month reporting period the workforce of 10 men, with an approximate expected maximum of 2240 man days, shared 100 days sick leave between 6 members; the remaining 4 members of the workforce did not take any time off for sickness. Long term sick leave is broken down as 32 days following a knee operation, 20 days for a respiratory infection, 24 days following injury and surgery, 17 days for stress.

The Office for National Statistics has advised that in the UK last year on average people are absent from work for 4.3 days a year. Whilst the staff is below this figure, the workforce is not, perhaps linked to the types of work carried out. This will be monitored to see what improvements can be made.

Training was provided as follows:

Teleporter Training – 1 member of staff + 2 members of workforce
Weed boats Safety Course – 5 members of workforce
First Aid at Work Refresher – 3 members of staff
RYA PB2 Course – 1 member of workforce

Publicity

Talks – it was pleasing to note that BBC Look East came to part of the Inspection in 2016 and publicised the proposals to undertake the bank raising scheme. The Chairman; Iain Smith; and our Working Foreman, Julian Carlile; were interviewed and Look East filmed a section of the Great Raveley Drain banks and our flail mowers in operation. Such publicity is always welcome.

The Chief Engineer presented at the ICE Flood Expo at the Excel Exhibition Centre in October and has chaired a session at the CIWEM Rivers and Coastal spring meeting in Birmingham.

Also, during the period representatives of the MLC have spoken about the MLC and our works to Peterborough Orton Rotary Club, the Peterborough Probus 87, the Haddenham Interest Society, the Peterborough Engineering Society, the EA area team and the WI.

Visits - the following visitors were received at St Germans Pumping Station:

22 nd April 2016	-	South Holland Growers Group
4 th May 2016	-	R G Carter
15 th August 2016	-	Marshland St James WI
6 th September 2016	-	Ms J Adams + friends (Members of the Public)
2 nd March 2017	-	Environment Agency

We have further visits arranged in April and June for the Probus 87 Club and Ford Y & C Model Owners Club respectively.

Media – the Commissioners' 'Twitter' presence now has 212 followers, up from 155 a year ago.

Web site – www.middlelevel.gov.uk - following the Board's approval an order was placed with Switch to revamp the Commissioners' website which included the adding of secure members' areas. This work is complete and the site is now live. The site has been redesigned to be more user focused and to promote the work that we do. Conservation, Planning, Navigation and a new section on 'Maintenance' play a prominent role. The site is now more flexible than was the case previously and hence further in-house developments are planned, particularly in relation to the planning and consenting area.

HMRC Visit

On the 16th March representatives of HMRC visited the offices of the MLC. This was a pre-planned visit and part of HMRC's normal arrangements for spot checking organisations. Prior to and at the meeting a number of questions were raised and in response information has been supplied. It was interesting to note that Defra had a representative at the meeting from their small HMRC team who were apparently set up to support 'the Defra family'. Our internal auditors, Whittings and Partners, were also present at the meeting at our invitation, as was the previous Chief Executive Iain Smith.

Most queries raised have been closed off now with no further action by HMRC planned. However, some further information and checking is required in relation to vehicles, living accommodation and status/off-payroll working.

It was also suggested at the meeting that a VAT inspection may follow on from this process.

ICT Report

Hardware – problems were experienced with backing up the virtual servers and TSG were asked to assist with identifying the cause of this. The fault appeared to be partially software related and partially hardware related but at the time of report is believed to be fully resolved.

The plotter has been replaced with a unit which both plots and scans documents up to A0. This has assisted significantly in allowing for the electronic filing of large drawings which we were previously unable to do. For this or at the latest next year our workstations which are now seven years old will be replaced (current cost estimate £15K).

Consideration is being given to entering into a support contract for the servers to reduce the burden on the Chief Executive who currently maintains them and also to provide resilience for the Commissioners.

Software – the rating software upgrade to the South Holland developed DRS system has been implemented. Automated links to GIS and accountancy software will be implemented shortly.

Mobile Phones and Land Lines – land line provision remains with TML and staff and workforce mobile phone lines are with EE. The telemetry mobile lines remain with Vodafone as the cheapest supplier for this service.

Telemetry Master Station – this unit, which is now around eight years old, is being replaced and will run on a Windows 10 platform.

Engineering Executive Commentary

This section broadly summarises the key activities of each of the three engineering departments serving the MLC and client IDBs. It is intended to provide an overview of work carried out during the above period and that planned for the future.

A brief summary of progress on the Middle Level Strategic Improvement Scheme and progress on GiA applications is also included.

Technical Services Department

The work carried out by the Technical Services Department during the last twelve months can be briefly summarised as follows:

On a consultancy basis:-

Land Drainage Channel Improvement Works South of the A47 – Highways England has reaffirmed that it intends to carry out a scheme comprising the enlargement of a culvert under the A47 near Wisbech. As the EA has also confirmed that this is sufficient to develop a business case for downstream improvements the Hundred of Wisbech IDB has instructed the MLC to proceed with the required work which is therefore underway.

Stow Pumping Station – the MLC developed a business case on behalf of the Board for the replacement of a 1950s pumping station and have been successful in obtaining approval for 100% GiA. Scheme design and tender document production have however been delayed as the EA has stated that as the station is a new building it will need to undergo a national screening process for eel passage.

Washways and Ransonmoor Pumping Station Refurbishments – these schemes for the Warboys, Somersham and Pidley IDB and Ransonmoor DDC Board were completed in 2016.

Green Dyke Pumping Station Replacement – the Ramsey, Upwood and Great Raveley IDB asked for a report on the likelihood of GiA for the replacement of Green Fen Pumping

Station. The economics were tested and the Board has instructed the development of the business case for the new station.

Planning – the Department continues to trial revised methods of dealing with planning applications and whilst there have been some signs of improvement it is clear that we need to continue to explore the options for getting better engagement from developers and planning authorities. To this end the Chief Executive, MLC Solicitor and Planning Engineer have met with the Head of Planning Services for Peterborough and Fenland Councils. Closer working and talks/workshops have been offered to assist in the education of planning officers on the specific issues relating to the Fens area.

Works Department

Water Resources and Control of Water Levels

Spring/Summer 2016

The spring months of 2016 were generally noted for lower than average temperatures and above average rainfall. This minimised early season pressure on the Commissioners' system for water abstraction, and allowed levels within both Bevills Leam and St German's ponds to be managed comfortably. The higher than average rainfall during this time, produced good flows in the Peterborough Nene, providing plentiful supplies for Anglian Water to maintain its various reservoir intakes. As a result, Anglian Water was able to reduce its licenced intake by approximately 20Mld (Million litres/day), for a seven-day period during late July. This surplus water was made available to abstractors within the Commissioners' system, through the offices of the EA. It was welcomed at this critical point in the season as pressure for water abstraction peaked during the fine dry period, and no IDB slacker or irrigation restrictions were necessary. It is without doubt the Commissioners' attendance at the Summer Liaison Meeting, with Anglian Water and the EA representatives, which contributed to this successful working partnership.

Autumn/Winter 2016/17

Water levels within the Commissioners' system were maintained comfortably during the winter period, and are now gradually being raised in anticipation of the drier summer months ahead. Statistics show 2016 to be a year of marked contrasts, the first half being generally wetter than average and the second half being generally drier. The general dry trend continued into the first four months of 2017 and, in contrast to the same period last year, current conditions and forward projections seem to indicate we may need to prepare for a drier summer than we experienced last year. Some light sporadic irrigation of crops, such as onions, that are emerging through capped silt soils is currently taking place. The annual Summer Liaison Meeting has been arranged and will be hosted by the EA at its Peterborough offices in early May. This should again give the Commissioners the opportunity to reinforce their point to other stakeholders including the EA and Anglian Water, that by working in close collaboration with them, and with a sound understanding of other stakeholders' requirements, regular updates and the ability to micro-manage water availability during the driest periods of the summer, we can maximise the benefit of available flows in the EA controlled River Nene, without compromise to the environment.

Banks and Channel Maintenance Dredging and Bank Raising – programmed maintenance dredging works were undertaken along the Catchwater Drain between Glatton Road and Straight Drove Bridge following harvest last year. Additional channel cleansing works were also undertaken along the Pigwater Drain (Horsey Toll Sluice to Yards End Dyke junction), Monks Lode (New Dyke junction to Connington Fen Bridge) and New Dyke (Speed the Plough junction to Holme winding hole). Maintenance dredging works commenced in mid-January on the Old River Nene, (Bevills Pond side), extending to Nightingales Corner junction.

Dredging of Well Creek – following the Commissioners' approval at their last meeting, the third phase of dredging works along the Well Creek between Hall Bridge (New Bridge) and Upwell Church Bridge was undertaken in early January. The work was undertaken by a contractor using a long reach hydraulic machine, operated from the highway on the south-east bank, (St Peters

Road), under a partial road closure/traffic control system. Dredgings were removed from the site by contractor and transported to the receiving site on the Commissioners' field adjacent to Salters Lode Lock. The works were undertaken during a navigation closure of this section of Well Creek.

Well Creek - Bank Subsidence – no further correspondence has been received from the relevant authorities. The bank remains in an unstable condition but does not pose a flood risk or navigational issue at the present time. It is proposed that this relatively short reach of the river will not be dredged at the present time; for fear that the dredging operation could well exacerbate the current bank subsidence and stability issues.

Ramsey High Lode – Bank Subsidence – it is unfortunate to have to report that following the occurrence of approximately 15 metres of bank subsidence at the rear of an adjacent burnt out industrial unit located on the Stocking Fen Industrial Estate last September, the Commissioners' insurers have subsequently advised the damage is neither covered by the site owner/occupiers nor the Commissioners' policies. It is therefore proposed to undertake the necessary bank revetment works in the near future at the Commissioners' expense.

Banks and Channels Weed Control – the regime of seasonal bank mowing, working broadly in-line with the Commissioners' Operations Manual, has continued again this year. The conservation cut commenced in mid-March and was completed in early April last year. Two subsequent Health & Safety cuts to the system were undertaken during May and June. Full depth mowing on alternating sides has proven to be a useful tool in reducing the growth of some invasive weed species growing behind the dense marginal fringes of the watercourses. However, instances of Woody Nightshade, (*Solanum dulcamara*), proliferating the marginal vegetation corridor and spreading along banks, are now widespread throughout the system.

The main cut was completed by mid-December last year. Numerous mechanical breakdowns of the older Herder mower, combined with dense bank growth, slowed progress considerably.

This year's conservation cut commenced during late March, and is on course to be completed in early April.

Herbicide Trials – it is disappointing to report the proposed trials of Flumioxazin have been suspended, and the product approval licence application has been withdrawn. This leaves the aquatic industry in the precarious position of reliance on the Monsanto/Bayer Glyphosate product, Roundup Bi-active Pro. The licence for the continued use of this product in aquatic situations was recently extended to the end of 2018. It is hoped that following the ongoing Brexit negotiations, Defra will be willing to extend Roundup with full approval for aquatic applications well beyond this date.

Navigation – last year's navigation season passed with one notable incident involving a narrow boat that became stuck whilst attempting to undertake a turning manoeuvre at Holme winding hole.

It appears the number of illegally moored 'live aboard' boats within the Middle Level System continues to increase year on year. The Commissioners have continued work on this issue with colleagues from the EA and Fenland District Council (FDC), to prevent the increase of illegal and over stay mooring from becoming more problematic. There is currently an issue with a residential boat which has been moored on March Town 48 hours public moorings for many months now. If we have failed to persuade the owner to move before the Board meet this matter will be raised for discussion.

Complaints were received from villagers of Upwell and Outwell and members of the Well Creek Trust, when a boat passing along the 'Link Route' navigated through Well Creek during a cold spell in January, ruining the ice along with the slim chance that ice skating could have been held on the river this year.

Navigation and turning for navigating craft at Holme winding hole has been improved with the recent removal of the small island which prevented longer and wider vessels from turning at this terminal navigation point.

Fly-tipping – incidents of fly-tipping throughout both the Commissioners' and constituent IDB controlled watercourses continues to increase at present, as does the expenditure for removing the resultant debris from watercourses.

Mechanical & Electrical Engineering Department

Along with MLC work, major overhauls and maintenance of IDB pumping plant have been completed during the period. A brief description of the works carried out over the past twelve months, together with recommendations for future works follows:

St Germans – experienced a quiet year. No major breakdowns have occurred and there have been no further issues with the backup generator aftercoolers. Capacitors have been replaced as per the Board's instruction and the manufacturer's recommendations. It is planned to install waterless coolant in all of the pump-sets to prevent further problems. Two of the generator controllers were damaged through electrical shorting of the CT's. All genset CT's have now been replaced.

Ashline Lock bypass weir – has had new tilting gates fitted which have proven much easier to operate.

Major plant and motor overhauls – have been completed at Bevills Leam and one IDB pumping station and major station refurbishment schemes have been completed at two others.

One of the downstream gates at Stanground – developed a significant leak. The lock was de-watered and the necessary remedials carried out over the winter.

Periodic Electrical Retesting/Remedial Works – are being carried out at IDB installations as and when required.

Inlet Penstocks – have been replaced at several installations. Repairs to several automatic weedscreen cleaners have also been carried out together with one major overhaul. Three new automatic weedscreen cleaners have been installed. Replacement control equipment has been installed at one pumping station and new level control equipment at two others.

Middle Level Strategic Improvement Scheme

With the approval of the Board, as work necessary to underpin a GiA application, a refresh of the 2004 Middle Level Strategy is being undertaken. Following competitive tender Peter Brett Associates (Formally Hannah, Reed) provided a bid which was both well-structured and the lowest submitted. The consultants will give a presentation on the work completed so far at the Board meeting.

Water Resources & Control of Water Levels

Rainfall – mean rainfall over the area for the reporting period was 502mm which is 69mm less than the standard average.

Following a wet month in March 2016, rainfall totals for the following two months of April and May were close to the long-term average (LTA). June was then a wet month returning rainfall totals of 93mm equating to 176% LTA. Conversely July was drier than average receiving 27mm of rain, 55% LTA. August was the second consecutive dry month receiving 35mm of rainfall, 64% LTA. The dry weather continued throughout September. With rainfall totals of 43mm for the month, this equated to 87% LTA. October was the fourth consecutive drier than average month. Rainfall total during November was 108% of the LTA at 62mm. However, December and January were drier than average, meaning that 6 of the last 7 months of 2016 had below average rainfall. February returned near average rainfall totals with a month end value of 37mm. March was wetter than average with significant rainfall on the 9th and 10th of the month. The recorded month end rain total was 64.5mm, equating to 141% LTA.

Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) – continued to be ‘below normal’ during April 2016. A value of 29mm was recorded by the month end. This low value rose slowly through May and peaked at 64mm by the third week. Subsequent rainfall reduced the value to 54mm by the month end. Notably wet weather conditions during June resulted in SMD values decreasing to ‘exceptionally low’ levels. Values remained low at 30mm at the month end. Drier weather prevailed throughout July and this resulted in an average increase in values of 15mm a week throughout the month and by the month end the value had increased to 93mm. Values rose slowly throughout August resulting in a peak SMD of 125mm at the end of that month. SMD values during September remained at 130mm throughout the month, being the highest value recorded for this summer period. October SMD values remained relatively high for the time of year, and only started falling markedly during the second half of November to a month end value of 70mm. The falling value continued as would normally be expected for the time of year, and resulted in the December month end value of 55mm. This trend continued into 2017 with a steady decline in values gradually dropping to a low point in early March where a value of 15mm was recorded, following significant rainfall.

Water Levels (Main System) Summer 2016 – early season water levels were held slightly below ‘normal’ summer retention levels in both Bevills Leam and St Germans ponds, as cold wet weather prevailed, and the requirement for spray irrigation during the early season was greatly reduced. Following the warmer drier weather in July, water levels were raised to maximum summer retention levels in both ponds. Anglian Water was able, and willing for the first time, to cut back on its licenced intake of water from the Peterborough Nene for seven days during a short pressure period at the end of July. This timely intervention prevented a restriction on IDB water intake through slackers allowing abstraction to continue through the entire season unrestricted.

An email to Anglian Water, extending thanks for its co-operation, was sent from the MLC.

"Dear Mike,

I write to thank you for your co-operation for making an additional 20Mld (Million litres/day) of water available during the last week.

As with most summers, we never seem to get two alike, other than the short periods when water resources in the Lower Nene become pressured during fine dry periods.

The additional 20Mld enabled abstractors to continue to irrigate root crops, many of which are now reaching a critical stage for growth and quality as they near maturity and harvest.

I am sure that our positive dialogue at the annual Summer Liaison meeting with representatives from AW, EA and the Commissioners continues to be of paramount importance, and enables us to better understand our partners' requirements.

Best Regards

Jonathan Fenn

Operations Engineer

Middle Level Commissioners"

Mike Cook, Head of Water Resources at Anglian Water, replied on the 1st August.

"Jon

Many thanks for your e mail.

We are pleased to be able to share surplus water resources with the MLC.

Regards

Mike"

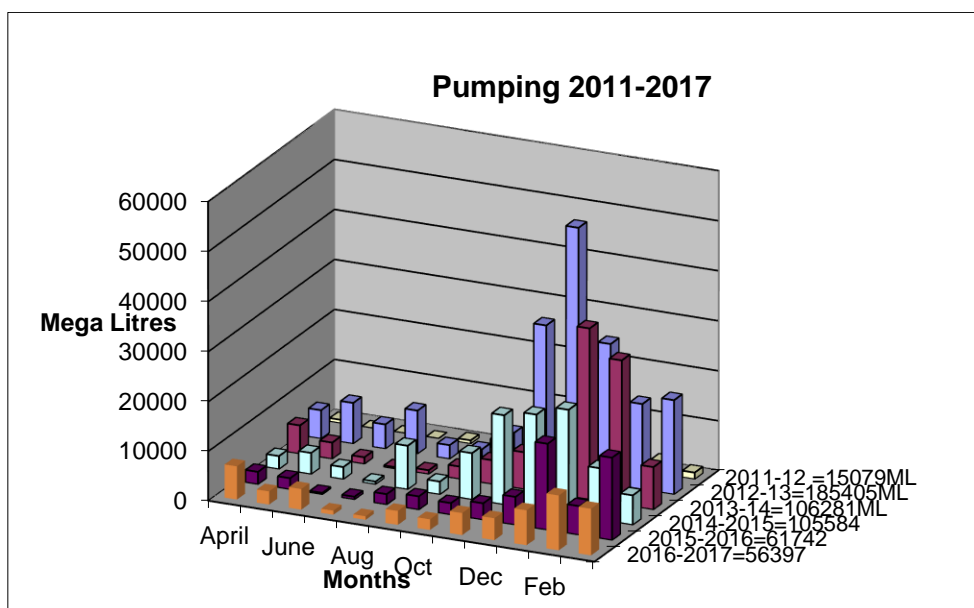
Water levels in both Bevills Leam and St Germans ponds were gradually lowered last autumn, in preparation for the onset of the autumn/winter pumping season. The season passed by remarkable smoothly. Water levels were readily maintained at both pumping stations for the duration of the winter period using automated pumping modes. Water levels in the Bevills Leam pond were held slightly lower than normal to allow for maintenance dredging work to proceed along the Old River

Nene at Ramsey St Mary's with maximum efficiency. At the time of reporting, water levels in both ponds are gradually being raised towards the summer retention level.

Water Levels (Well Creek) – water levels have been maintained in the Well Creek by pumping water into it from the Main Drain at the Aqueduct to pre-set parameters.

Pumping – during the twelve-month period, 56549 and 13146 megalitres of water were pumped at St Germans and Bevills Leam respectively.

The winter, in terms of water pumped, has been a dry one. However, when compared to winter 2011-12 the output of St Germans Pumping Station was 3 times as much as that extremely dry period and similar to the Station's first winter (2010-11). One noticeable difference was the number of times the Station has been shut down by low water at Bodsey Bridge suggesting a higher than usual occurrence of southerly winds. Nonetheless the Station has performed extremely well with only a few minor faults all fixed within 24hrs.



Maintenance Work

St Germans Pumping Station – the condition of the generator heat exchangers remains stable and pH values have been kept at an acceptable level over the period. However with the life of organic acid technology coolant coming to an end it is proposed we move to the pH stable waterless coolant successfully trialled on generator No1. It is therefore intended we change 2 generators over in autumn 2017 and the remaining 3 in late spring 2018 the cost of each will be around £4000.

With no more incidents relating to the generator's CT's this latent defect is now considered resolved.

Following on from the replacement of the 648 input/output module capacitors the 12 filter module capacitors were successfully replaced in the period. The unforeseen problem with this planned maintenance work is the disposal of the old capacitors which are deemed to be hazardous waste. To date we have been unable to find a recycler that will accept them the next step is to contact the manufacturers and ask them how and where they should be disposed of.

The pump removal table has been painted and is now safely stored in its newly completed storage building.



Attempts to remove the mussels from the elver pass delivery line were unsuccessful and with spring upon us the decision was made to install the spare pump which is capable of pumping at a higher pressure. This will overcome the blockage in the short term until we can find another way of resolving the issue.

The final 2 bulk diesel tanks were topped up with diesel in March and with the first 2 tanks filled in 2015 we can, with reasonable confidence, say that there are no issues relating to bio additives that have caused problems elsewhere.

Over the last 12 months there have been some minor issues with the SCADA (supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) PCs, it is believed these issues related to corrupt files and lack of storage space for historical files these issues seem to have now been resolved. The problem still remains that the two PCs are reaching the end of their life and replacements/upgrade will require updated software, as the current software is now longer available or supported. However, as at present the units are working well, an upgrade cannot be justified.

During March the Station underwent its routine deep clean and the results are excellent allowing us to keep the standards seen and commented on by all our visitors at a consistently high level.

Main Drain/Station Intake and Surrounds:

Bed Level – no dredging or re-profiling has been required and none is planned for at least the next few years.

Grass Cutting - the grass mowing contract has been undertaken by local contractors, Kew Grass Care, this season. The level of service continues to be satisfactory. The contract will continue to be reviewed annually to ensure best value is being achieved.

Tree Planting Scheme - most species of trees within the planting scheme, other than Ash, appear to be healthy and have produced a good canopy last season. The cool damp spring and early summer weather suiting the young trees' requirement for plentiful moisture throughout the growing season.

Aqueduct Bridge – there is nothing further to report at this time.

Bevills Leam Pumping Station



Engine Overhaul Programme/Inspections – as previously reported it is currently anticipated that the three diesel engines should provide adequate service for a while. This is to be reviewed in 3 years' time.

Pump Overhaul Programme – the planned inspection/service of the No1 pump at Bevills Leam commenced during late June 2016, removal of the discharge branch fixings required the use of a dive team

and proved to be difficult due to hard to access seized bolts which had to be cut off and required a second visit by the team. The pump was eventually lifted on 12th July and taken to the contractor's works where it was stripped to component level. The contractor's observations and works that were carried out and reinstallation and recommissioning of the pump were completed week commencing 19th September 2016.



The general condition of the pump, which was some 33 years old and has operated some 23000 hours, was good and therefore as a consequence it was recommended that removal and inspection of any of the other pumpset (which have operated for considerably less hours), will not be necessary for a further five years.

Improvements to the auxiliary generator/controls, which were to be carried out as the final part of the main standby generator scheme, have been completed.

Two of the three electric pump main isolators are becoming very difficult to operate and, being 35 years old they are obsolete; therefore it is planned to replace all three isolators during the summer together with some minor control improvements.

The no2 diesel tank has recently been approximately 50% filled with 10,000 litres of fuel and the fuel gauges which were faulty have been replaced.

Control Sluice – new access steps and a handrail have recently been installed on site to facilitate improved maintenance and operational access to the water evacuation penstock from Woodwalton reserve, adjacent to the Control Sluice structure.

Navigation Structures

Salter's Lode Lock – during the summer on a few isolated occasions the gate travel has stopped without warning, but was then restarted by simply resetting the start initiation. This suggested that the fault was just a slight misalignment of the encoders. Unfortunately the encoder PLC HMI screen had been damaged by the sun's UV radiation and cannot be viewed it was therefore been replaced, complete with housing around it to prevent further UV damage.

The fault recently reoccurred which prevented the gate from operating in the automatic mode. The cause of the fault was identified by connecting a laptop to the main PLC, the faults were then rectified and the gate made fully operational.

The PLC used is now obsolete, but we have managed to purchase a programmed spare from the original panel manufacturer who had a unit in stock. We are also attempting to ascertain if the software used to program it is still available. This will require a laptop with the Windows XP operating system installed on it.

The encoders themselves appear satisfactory but they have been in operation for over 7 years and insects have been known to find their way into the encoders, therefore purchase of a spare is being considered and service of the existing encoders is recommended which would be carried out

one at a time. The original supplier Aquatic Control Engineering has been asked to provide a quotation for their service and or eventual replacement.

The gate is also suffering some damage due to boat collisions, should serious damage occur the gate could possibly be rendered inoperable. The Board is reminded that there is no second line of defence from high tides.

Stanground Lock - it was reported that there was significant leakage occurring through one of the downstream mitre gates. From an above-water inspection it seemed that a hole of at least 200mm x 200mm had appeared in the gates' cladding. Temporary makeshift repairs were attempted, but were not successful and the lock required damming off and dewatering to carry out appropriate repairs. These works were undertaken over the winter period following issue of a planned closure notice.

Horseway Lock – the Commissioners' position regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the lock structure remains unchanged. Visual inspections have continued to be undertaken to ensure its condition is serviceable should the link to Welches Dam lock be reopened. It is intended to approach the IWA to see if they are interested in carrying out volunteer work on the lock to keep it in a serviceable condition whilst negotiations with the EA over the re-opening of Welches Dam lock continue.



Ashline Lock - bypass weir works - following approval from the Executive Committee to proceed with the replacement of the existing gates an order was placed with HC Water Control for two stainless steel beamless drop down weir tilting gates. The new tilting gates were delivered on time by HC Water Control (at the end of March 2016) and installed using MLC labour during the first week in April. The performance of the gates to date has been very good.

Cardea Site SuDS – Persimmon Homes commissioned the MLC to survey the reed beds and balancing ponds serving the Cardea development near Stanground. This has been completed and a report issued which identified the works which would be required to bring the infrastructure, which provides storm water treatment and balancing, up to an adoptable standard. The works have recently been completed using both MLC and a contractor's plant and labour. Discussions are planned in relation to the long-term adoption of the facilities by the Commissioners, subject to payment covering the anticipated costs, however, our main Persimmon Homes contact, Ian Slater, has moved area and we now need to reconnect with the developer. The matter has been raised with the Head of Planning Services and the local MP Steven Barclay in the hope that extra pressure can be applied.

EA Tidal Entrance, Salter's Lode Lock/Old Bedford Entrance Desilting – following a site meeting and subsequent request from the EA, work to clear siltation from the EA controlled tidal side of Salter's Lode Lock and clearance from the Old Bedford River from its confluence with the River Great Ouse to Whitehall Farm Bridge, channel clearance works have recently been undertaken by the Commissioners' contractor. A 22 metre extra-long reach machine was employed to undertake the silt clearance works. It is anticipated this silt clearance will be required on an annual basis to allow Salter's Lode Lock to operate efficiently. The works were undertaken on a fully rechargeable basis.

Weed and Grass Control on Banks & Channels

Rigid Hornwort – late season growths of this weed were experienced in 2016. Warm water temperatures and fine settled weather conditions during August and September again proven to be ideal growing conditions for this semi-buoyant aquatic plant which proliferated during the late season. The weed mass in its buoyant stage was most noticeable on sections of the Twenty Foot,

Forty Foot, Horseyway Arm, Sixteen Foot, New Pophams Eau and Pigwater Drain, the latter water channel requiring the intervention of a contractor's machine to remove the excessive dense mass of weed from the watercourse. The Commissioners' weed boat fleet was used to remove the weed from the other affected watercourses.

Duck Weed – the incidence of this floating weed seemed to have made a significant return to many MLC watercourses last season following several years of near absence. Its return was probably attributable to the warm conditions during the late summer and higher than average water temperatures. Although the weed's visual reappearance gives cause for concern, no specific remedial actions were required to remove its mass from water channels last year.



Azolla – last season's azolla growth was sporadic but not problematic within the Commissioners' watercourses.

Reed/Lily Spraying – a favourable weather window during the summer of 2016 allowed for herbicide treatment of lilies and emergent aquatic weed to be made. Channels treated included the Sixteen Foot, Forty Foot, Twenty Foot, New Pophams Eau, Main Drain upstream of the Aqueduct, Old River Nene, Bevills Leam and Whittlesey Dyke.

Weed-cutting (boats) – the weed-cutting and clearing boats worked their way throughout the system last season. Working priority was given to water channels forming the 'link route' (the main navigational route during the busy summer period). As aquatic weed growth slowed during early autumn the boats were deployed throughout the Commissioners' system, cutting marginal reed and vegetation back in preparation for the winter pumping season.

Flail Mowing – last year's conservation cut was followed by two rounds of Health & Safety mowing, undertaken during May and June. The wet weather during June hampered mowing progress, with conditions ideal for the dense grass sward to proliferate. The main cut commenced in mid-July, and has been slowed by mechanical breakdowns and the dense grass sward.

Whilst the Spearhead Energreen machine has generally operated in accordance with expectations the after sale service for the machine has proved somewhat mixed. Engine oil leaking issues were experienced, requiring the engine manufacturer, Deutz, to reseal the sump gasket and undertake other minor after sales work to the engine management unit. Other issues have recently been experienced with a daily air pressure loss from the tyres. This seems to have been attributed to faulty steel rims on three of the eight wheels. New rims have now been fitted. It is hoped that these 'teething problems' will be behind us and that this year the machine will be able to prove its worth.

Following the Board's approval at its last meeting, orders for a replacement tractor and flail mower were placed with Thurlow Nunn Standen for a Massey Ferguson 7720 tractor and Mastenbroek, for a Herder Cavalier flail mower. At the time of reporting, the tractor and mower have been delivered to the Commissioners' depot awaiting final adjustments to tracking width and some additional water ballasting in the rear offside tyre before being put to work. It is envisaged the new flail mower/top mowing configuration will significantly improve mowing work rates and reduce down time experienced in the last season with the old New Holland/Herder Grenadier mower.

The old New Holland tractor and Herder Grenadier mower, which had previously been reported to the Board as having reliability issues and in need of replacement, completed the grass mowing season and were sold through the eBay auction site.

This season's Conservation mowing round commenced in mid-March and is on schedule to be completed prior to the Easter bank holiday weekend.

Considerable downtime has been experienced during the last two mowing seasons with the Commissioners' flail mowing heads, from various items of fly-tipped debris not visible to the

operator, causing damage to the flail rotors requiring them to be stripped out and sent to a specialist engineering company in Yorkshire to be re-balanced. In order to maximise future workrate and efficiency, a quotation has been obtained from Mastenbroek Ltd for a spare flail head that could be interchanged in future with damaged units on either the 2011 or 2017 machines.

Fly-Tipping – has increased significantly within the last two years, both within the Commissioners' watercourses and also IBD controlled watercourses. Items recently removed from the Commissioners' channels include:

<i>Bevills Leam</i>	Panel Van bodywork Sheep Carcase
<i>Main Drain</i>	Large quantity of vehicle tyres and gas bottles
<i>Pigwater Drain</i>	Large quantity of home catalogues
<i>Ramsey High Lode</i>	Shopping trollies and ride on children's toys
<i>Kings Dyke</i>	Various debris including a moped
<i>Forty Foot River (Horseway Arm)</i>	ATM Cash dispensing machine (emptied of cash)

Trees and Bushes - tree and bush clearance works have been necessary during the reporting period along the following channels;

Old River Nene

March Town Centre – emergency removal of wind-blown willow tree branch blocking navigational passage.

Bill Fen – removal of wind-blown willow tree branch on the landward side of the tree following storm Doris.

Ramsey High Lode

Removal of a wind-blown branch blocking navigational passage through the channel.

Whittlesey Dyke

Pollarding of diseased Lombardy Poplar and Willow trees adjacent to commercial and a residential property along the watercourse.

Great Raveley Drain

Emergency removal of a large conifer from the watercourse at Speed the Plough junction following storm Doris.

Removal of self-sown saplings and bushes from Commissioners' soak dyke at the back of the east side of the raised embankment following a request from local IDB.

Forty Foot River (Horseway Arm)

Removal of limbs from a large wind-blown willow tree on the north-east bank at Holly Farm, Horseway following storm Doris.

Removal of two large willow trees from the south west bank following storm damage to both tree crowns following storm Doris.

Pig Water Drain

Pollarding of overgrown willow along the watercourse near to Conquest Lode intake.

Maintenance Works & Machine Cleansing, Banks and Channels

Phase II Well Creek Dredging (Thurlands Drove Junction – New Bridge) – dredgings placed on adjacent arable fields were left to dry last summer. A contractor's machine was hired to bucket spread the material to allow autumn cultivations to be undertaken. Extraneous debris within the levelled dredged material was removed by handpicking, using additional labour from WMS Recruitment.



Phase III Well Creek Dredging (Hall Bridge [New Bridge] – Church Bridge) – the third phase of the Well Creek dredging works was planned in conjunction with Norfolk County Highways' Department. A full road closure along the working site would have been preferable, but was not permissible due to the number of residential properties, businesses and the location of the village cemetery along the route. The dredging works commenced during the first week of January 2017. Dredgings arising from the works were transported from the site of production using contractor's tractors and trailers and deposited in an earth bund constructed on the Commissioners' grass field at Salter's Lode, where it has been left to dry out sufficiently to be re-handled.

Proposed Phase IV Well Creek Dredging (British Legion Footbridge, Upwell – Isle Bridge, Outwell) - it is proposed to continue with Well Creek dredging in 2018, and to undertake a fourth phase early next year. The proposed works will commence from the British Legion Footbridge, Upwell to Isle Bridge, Outwell, and will be undertaken from the adjacent highway. Resultant spoil will be transported away from the receiving site, as bankside disposal of dredged material along the dredging site is not available. The proposed works are, at this stage, in the process of being developed and are subject to approval from Norfolk County Highways Department for a partial road closure of Town Street (A1101), and where bankside access is clear of residential properties and gardens, the south east bank along Lowside, Outwell.

Catchwater Drain – last year's phased programmed machine cleansing works have been undertaken from the upstream extent of Glatton Road to Straight Drove Bridge by a contractor's long reach machine.

Pigwater Drain – a contractor's machine was required to clear a substantial growth of filamentous algae, (Cott) from the watercourse between Farcet Bridge and Great Fen Drove culvert (Tin Dump), during early summer last year. As usual, the coincidence of the algal bloom was linked to optimum growing conditions of strong sunlight and warm water temperatures, during the peak demand period for water abstraction from the Commissioners' system. A second algal bloom, combined with a dense mass of Rigid Hornwort required removal from the watercourse between Horsey Toll sluice and Farcet overspill following harvest.

Monks Lode (New Dyke Junction – Connington Fen Bridge) – emergent and submerged vegetation were removed from the channel during the late summer 2016 using a contractor's long reach machine. The weed mass was placed along the landward side of the bank and will be left to compost over the winter months.

Whittlesey Dyke (Whittlesey Sewerage Treatment Works – Lattersey Hill Farm Paddocks) – the dredgings arising from last year's desilting works were spread to bank and left to dry sufficiently to be bucket spread and levelled using a contractor's hydraulic machine. Items of debris were hand-picked and removed from site.

New Dyke (Speed the Plough Junction – Holme Winding Hole) – an algal bloom combined with dense growths of submerged aquatic vegetation required clearing at the end of July 2016, in order to provide a clear passage for navigation.

Old River Nene – Ramsey St Mary's (Lodes End Lock – Nightingales Corner Junction) –



maintenance dredging works were undertaken in the New Year to remove a build-up of sediment and siltation from the water channel, using a contractor's long reach machine. The resultant dredgings have been placed along the adjacent banks and will be levelled in preparation for incorporation back into arable cultivation in the autumn months. Where the Commissioners' bank level survey indicates banks are low, the dredged material will be utilised to raise low sections of existing bank, most notably along the south bank from Ramsey St Mary's bridge to Nightingales Corner junction.

Clay Puddling/Bank Raising/Penetrations

Emergency Clay Puddling Store – this scheme, which involves the MLC taking a lease of a small area of land at a peppercorn rent from the Wildlife Trust, was long delayed due initially to the terms of the draft lease proposed by the Trust's Solicitor and latterly by the need for the Trust to obtain approval from the Crown, as former owners of the land. Those issues were resolved and works commenced on site during February to construct the access roadway and entrance to the Clay Store utilising materials from the nearby Whittlesey brick yards. Clay was brought onto the site, stockpiled and 'tracked-in' to prevent it drying unduly whilst it is being



stored. An entrance gate and stock proof fencing have been installed around the perimeter of the site, to demarcate the store boundary and prevent grazing stock accessing the site in the future. Unfortunately road planings, that had been pre ordered to top off the access roadway, were not available when the construction of the store was being undertaken. These will be added when the planings and a hydraulic excavator are next available in the local area.

Kings Dyke to Briggate West – bank raising works to raise a low lying section along the south bank of Kings Dyke, between the Railway Bridge and Briggate West, were completed last year. Clay material was imported to the site and the adjacent access road was raised and topped off with recycled aggregate material.

Old River Nene, Chalderbeach Farm – a short length of bank raising was completed during September along the north west bank. Approximately 200 tonnes of clay material was imported and delivered to site by haulage contractor's lorries, whilst bank conditions were suitable.

Old River Nene, Greenvale Factory – approximately 470m of bank raising work was completed along the east bank of the Old River Nene during the late summer last year, taking advantage of free suitable material from the adjacent Greenvale factory. A contractor's hydraulic machine and trailers were utilised to cart and place the material along the newly raised embankment.

Bank Slips and Seepage

Ramsey High Lode - bank slip repair works will be required to address a bank slip approximately 10m in length along the east bank of Ramsey High Lode. The bank slip is located to the rear of the industrial units on the Stocking Fen Estate. It is anticipated the necessary bank revetment and channel clearance works will be undertaken shortly.

Old River Nene, Ramsey St Mary's – a short length of bank seepage was evident following last year's harvest along the north-west bank of the Old River Nene.

Approximately 100 tonnes of clay were imported to the site and placed into a puddle trench along the bank using a contractor's machine.

Great Raveley Drain – bank seepage approximately 100m upstream of Green Dyke Pumping Station was reported to the engineers before harvest last year. It was necessary to import clay material to site and puddle approximately 40m of the east bank to staunch the seepage. At the time of reporting the bank remains sealed.

Telemetry

The existing Telemetry Master Station is now in excess of 10 years old and run on the Windows XP operating system, which is no longer supported. Therefore it is being replaced with an up to date unit running Windows 10. The upgrade should be complete by the time the Board meet.

As previously reported the planned replacement of the older telemetry outstations is being put in hand as these units fail. These stations are considered beyond end of life and can no longer be repaired or relied upon over the short or medium term.

It is also proposed to install WebWAX as a backup system for critical sites which will provide a redundancy measure in that all sites will send data through to the WebWAX server as well as to the Master Station. This will ensure that in the event of Master Station failure the critical sites will still be transmitting data which will be viewable on a web browser.

The critical sites that have been identified are as follows:

- Abbey Farm
- Bevills Leam
- Control Sluice
- Ransonmoor
- St Germans
- Burrowmoor
- Wild Goose Leys Rain Gauge
- Holme Rain Gauge

This will be implemented during the summer following commissioning of the new Masterstation.

Property

Depot – only routine maintenance has been required.

Offices – thought has been given to emergency event management and the potential for loss of power to the office. At the November meeting it was proposed that the 2017/18 budget included for some modest expenditure on equipment, such as a mobile generation unit, that can be used to power emergency lighting, phones and key computers in this scenario.

A quotation for a permanent silenced genset was obtained which is summarised below:

SDMO J44K Standby Generator	£6800.00
Delivery	£455.00
125A Manual Changeover Switch	£585.00
Electrical Installation	£4,308.00
Building and Civil Works	£2,500.00
 Total	 £14,648.00
 Optional Extended Run Fuel Tank 230 litre	 £647.00
Optional Extended Run Fuel Tank 420 litre	£749.00
Optional Canopy Colour Change	£341.00

Electrical Testing - Portable Appliance Testing was carried out at the Depot, Office, St Germans, Bevills Leam and Control Sluice sites during September 2016.

Salter's Lode Lock House – the heating system serving the property is a combination of oil fired and wood burner with back boiler. The wood burner required replacement and the whole system required modifications to meet minimum safety standards. These works have been completed. Also recently, following a failure, it was discovered that the on-site package foul treatment works were in a poor state of repair and required refurbishment. These remedial works are being put in hand.

6 Deerfield Road, March – this property was previously purchased as our sub-office adjacent to the former depot, prior to our move to Whittlesey Road. Since the move to the present offices and the depot also now being on the Whittlesey Road site, the property has ceased to be operational and planning permission for change of use back to a dwelling was obtained and the property let out.

The present tenant enquired whether the MLC would be prepared to sell the property to her, subject to valuation and the price being within her financial range. Based upon a valuation from William H Brown it was suggested that the property should be worth in the order of £150,000. The Board resolved to place the house on the market to allow it to gain its maximum return for ratepayers. Three estate agents then inspected and valued the property at £150K, £160 and between £177.5K and £180K. The property was placed on the market in early spring with Harrison Murry, at the upper valuation. There has not been a large amount of interest but it is pleasing to be able to report that an offer for £166K was made by a cash buyer. This initial offer was rejected and a final offer of £168K was made and has been accepted.

Plant & Vehicles

General – on the whole the plant and vehicles operated well during the period.

Vehicles – delivery was taken in April 2016 of a New Ford Transit 350 (ordered through Anglia Farmers). It replaced the 2005 registered transit van, used by the workshop fitters, the old transit was sold by auction on ebay for £2440 including VAT.

Two trucks were replaced during the year and a further two will be replaced this year.

Mowers – see item on Flail Mowing.

Weed Boats – all boats have generally operated satisfactorily with only the usual maintenance requirements and repairs to the cutting heads being necessary.

Draft guidance, produced by AINA, for a Standard for Inland Waterway Non Passenger Vessels has been received which appeared to be excessive when related to the weed boats we use.

Hemos (the manufacturers of our boats) were consulted and agreed with our opinion and as a consequence made an official CE-declaration referring to the guidance produced by AINA.

Miscellaneous Items – also purchased this year were a sweeper bucket for the teleporter, a replacement chipper, and a replacement flail head for the newer Herder. An agricultural trailer will be purchased this year to allow us to transport spoil and other materials.

Asset Records

Nothing further has been heard on the EA AIMS system of asset recording. The Commissioners have surveyed all known penetrations through their maintained banks, some of which are now redundant and in some cases in poor condition. Where one or more of these identified structures is owned by an IDB they are being contacted and asked to discuss the best course of action.

Improvements and Surveys

St Germans New Pumping Station – as has been the case for some time, the position regarding the outstanding claim of Mr Loades remains that Mr Loades' agent Jonathan Fryer has not sought to progress the matter. This matter has been outstanding for some years with no contact from Mr Fryer and is likely soon to be time barred. The District Valuer has recently contacted the Chief Executive and has proposed that the case be closed for this and all other land related claims.

River Works – the extent of bank raising works is described elsewhere in this report.

Bevills Leam Pumping Station – the priorities for this Station are:

The replacement of the main pump control components that are generally now obsolete. This has been partially achieved through the backup generator installation scheme. Further improvements planned by way of replacement of the Station's auxillary generator/controls have been completed.

What to do about the Dorman engines and gearboxes for pumps 4, 5 & 6 will need to be addressed within the medium term. However this would likely trigger the eel regulations requiring replacement pumps to be installed, it is therefore recommended that any major changes to the Station are postponed until further clarification is obtained from the EA.

The lack of smoke/heat detection and fire alarm equipment needs to be reviewed and action taken if necessary.

Permanently stop the rain ingress through the Station roof.

Embankment Raising Works – to underpin the business case for a bank raising scheme it has been necessary to commission a refresh of the Middle Level Strategy. This work is taking the shape of an addendum to the existing strategy. It addresses issues such as changes in legislation, changes in climate change guidance, changes in methods of analysis and scheme choice development utilising the Treasury's 5 Business Case rules. In addition the ISIS computer model is being improved and updated to reflect the changes made to the system since 2004, including bank raising, the Aqueduct works and, of course, the replacement of St Germans Pumping Station. Work is advancing steadily and is being undertaken by Peter Brett Associates at a cost of just around £50K. 50% of this cost is being recovered through GiA.

Sixteen Foot Survey – a channel bed survey of the river was undertaken in-house and indicated deposits of sediment and siltation averaging around 600mm above the design bed level. Although this does not seem excessive considering the timescale since dredging was last undertaken, it may be a contributing factor to the sluggish flows which have been noted following heavy rainfall and pumping operations at St Germans Pumping Station. The results are under review and it is likely that a scheme for planned dredging will be proposed within the next three years.

Environment Agency (EA) Studies/Works/Plans

Ouse Washes Reservoir Works

The Board will recall that, in addition to the Nene Washes being a 'large raised reservoir' under the control of a Panel Engineer, the Ouse Washes has similar status. The Panel Engineer has issued a report "in the interests of safety", under the 1975 Reservoirs Act section 10, requiring certain works to be undertaken by 2021. These, we have been advised, will involve the raising of the Middle Level Barrier Bank to above the 1 in 1,000 years event levels. The Panel Engineer has stated that flows above this level would not be able to enter the washes hence do not need to be considered. Works are also expected on the South Barrier Bank, but these will offer a lesser level of protection and are simply addressing an issue of low spots. Works should span three years and will be designed to fit in with the 'conservation window'.

Cranbrook Drain/Counter Drain (Welches Dam Pumping Station) Strategy Study – there is nothing further to report at this time.

Whittlesey Washes – work to reinforce the South Barrier Bank to meet the design standard required by the Reservoirs Act Panel Engineer is complete.

Stakeholder Representation and/or Consultation - is maintained in respect of the following:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Flood Warning Planning Group – Chief Exec
Great Fen Steering Committee – Chief Exec
Wet Dredgings – Operations Engineer
British Standards Institute CB501 – Chief Engineer representing ADA
EA National Asset Management Technical Advisory Group (AMTAG) – Chief Exec representing ADA
CIWEM (Chartered Institute for Water and Environmental Management):– Rivers and Coastal Group committee Vice Chair – Chief Exec
Updating Freeboard Allowance Steering Group – Chief Exec
AINA Wet Dredgings Group – Operations Engineer
Huntingdonshire Local Plan & SFRA – Planning Engineer
Fenland Local Plan – Planning Engineer
Peterborough Flood & Water Management Partnership – Planning Engineer
KL&WN Local Plan – Planning Engineer
East Cambs Local Plan, SFRA & WCS – Planning Engineer
Peterborough Local Plan, SFRA & WCS – Planning Engineer
South Cambs Local Plan – Planning Engineer
Fenland Developers Forum – Planning Engineer and Assistant Engineer
March Flood Investigation Group – Planning Engineer
Cambs County Flood & Water SPD Steering Group – Planning Engineer (recently completed)
EA Small Scheme Streamlining Grant Working Group – Chief Exec
EA/IDB Eel Liaison Group – Chief Exec as Co-Chair
Anglian Water Natural Capital Workshop – Chief Exec
Cambs ACRE, Giving Nature The Edge – Chief Exec and Environmental Officer
Well Creek Trust – Operations Engineer

Planning

Planning Applications – feedback from discussions with Councillors during the Board's Tour of Inspection was positive. Meetings with a senior officer of Peterborough City Council and the joint head of Planning Services for Peterborough and Fenland Councils have been held, but it is clear that the planning authorities have suffered from the severe cuts implemented and that there is a lot of pressure on them to support development and expansion. Whilst it is hoped that improvements can be made in provision of a joined-up approach (with the planning authorities) on flood risk and consenting matters, it must be recognised that the Commissioners have limited resources and the Councils' officers limited understanding of technical issues, hence there is no simple fix available.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – the position with SuDS remains unsatisfactory in relation to the adoption and long-term arrangements for maintaining them. I wrote recently to all our local MPs on this matter and obtained a response from Andrea Leadsom MP, via Elizabeth Truss MP, suggesting that the policing of SuDS maintenance will be down to the planning authorities.

Riverside Enhancements Ramsey Basin – the planned works for installation of a 180m length of piling along the southern end of High Lode on the eastern bank to create new moorings have been delayed, but may well (at least partially) be implemented by the County Council in late 2017. An application for consent has been received and approved.

Recreation

Navigation – an incident occurred when a narrow boat ran aground at the Holme winding hole at New Dyke, Connington Fen in December last year. This required the intervention of a MLC 4x4 vehicle to free the vessel, which had become wedged between the bank and the island at the site, whilst attempting a turning manoeuvre. The island has since been removed to prevent the reoccurrence of the situation in the future.

The illegal mooring of boats is starting to become a problem at certain locations, particularly by 'live aboards'. Many public moorings have a time restriction ie mooring for 36 hours only, however a number of these boats moor up for days at a time before being asked to move on. This was highlighted this winter by a boat mooring on the town moorings for over four months, despite various requests for him to move. Although the MLC own the river frontage the moorings are controlled by FDC who has said it does not have the powers to move boats on! The owner of this particular boat has engine problems and is not in a position to move on his own. We understand he also does not have a boat safety certificate or insurance. MLC are currently in discussion with FDC as if we take possession of the boat after serving notice we would be making the owner homeless.

Removal of Sunken Boat Kings Dyke - no further communication has been received on this matter and as a result the matter is therefore deemed to be closed.

Horseway to Old Bedford - a presentation on this project was given to the Board by the IWA at its November 2016 meeting.

Iain Smith sat on the EA's Regional Navigation Panel (now the Anglian Waterways Group) where issues relating to local navigations are discussed and it is anticipated that the MLC will continue to be represented on this panel. The current matter perhaps of most interest to the MLC remains the position regarding the Project (Project Hereward) to make Welches Dam Lock serviceable and reopen the navigation of the Forty Foot between Welches Dam and Horseway Lock.

Passing of EA Navigation Assets to CRT – the Board will recall that, some 10 years ago, there was a proposal by the then Government to transfer the navigations under the jurisdiction of the EA to British Waterways and that, while this proposal was at the time not proceeded with, it remained the Government's longer term intention, subject to it being acceptable to the Trustees of the Canal and River Trust (CRT) (which has taken over the British Waterways functions) and being "affordable". We have been informed that this matter is back on the agenda and is now being reconsidered but that discussions are at an early stage. It appears that funding may be the sticking point at present.

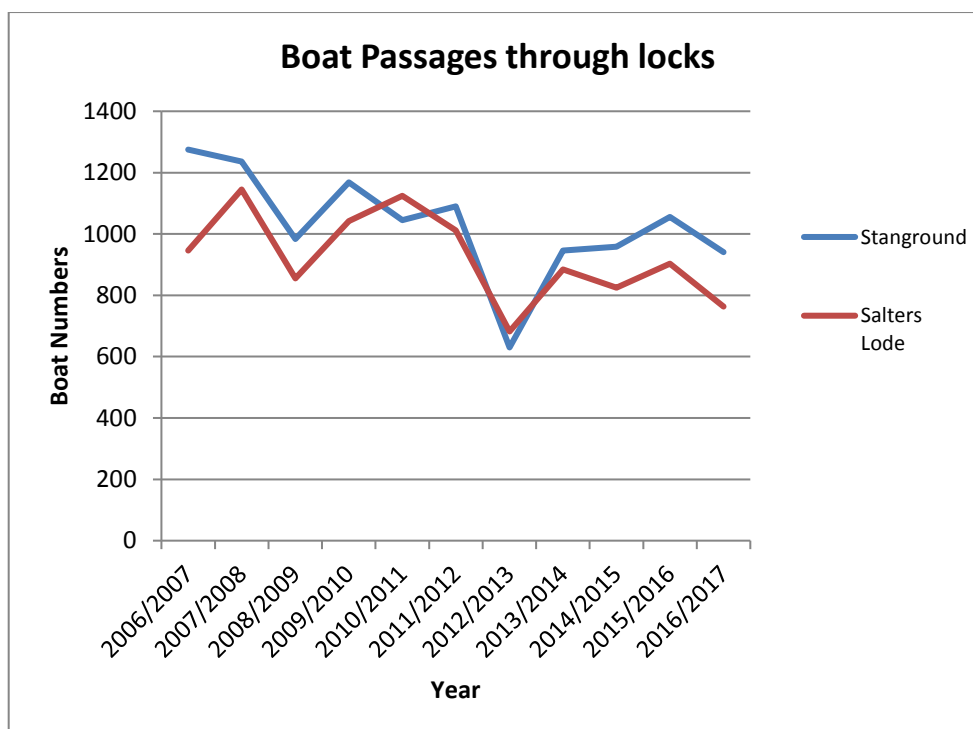
Well Creek Trust Moorings at Salter's Lode - these moorings have partially collapsed. Given the new Act the Board is pursuing it may be appropriate to offer to take over these moorings, if they are put in a good order.

General – we continue to seek to discuss with local planning authorities how navigation corridors will be protected and enhanced within Local Development Strategies and are pushing for appropriate local policies relating to navigation to be included within those Strategies.

Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Volunteering - a meeting to plan for the second season of voluntary work with the Peterborough branch of the IWA was held last autumn. The site meeting identified the work site along the Horseway arm of the Forty Foot River, and the scope of the works required. Planned lower bank bush trimming works continued along the north bank of the channel last season, to clear overhanging branches and bushes from the water line of the channel. The voluntary work was supervised and directed by an IWA trained Health and Safety advisor.

Boat Passages - boats movements through Stanground and Salter's Lode Locks were as shown below (figures for the previous year are shown in brackets):

Boat Passages – 2016/2017				
Month	Salter's Lode Lock		Stanground Lock	
	In	Out	In	Out
April	26 (34)	32 (38)	39 (34)	44 (43)
May	46 (46)	44 (54)	42 (81)	63 (79)
June	50 (76)	61 (69)	70 (72)	57 (89)
July	77 (78)	85 (91)	84 (94)	82 (89)
August	86 (103)	70 (91)	94 (116)	113 (109)
September	66 (60)	65 (61)	81 (78)	50 (61)
October	13 (27)	19 (28)	41 (31)	24 (27)
November	2(6)	6 (5)	6 (13)	4 (6)
December	1 (1)	2 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)
January	2 (0)	2 (0)	4 (0)	3 (0)
February	0 (2)	1 (1)	1 (0)	1 (1)
March	14 (27)	8 (13)	14 (9)	20 (18)
TOTAL	383 (460)	395 (452)	478 (530)	463 (525)



Angling

National Fishing Matches – the 2016 National Pike Angling was held in November along Glassmore Bank and Whittlesey Dyke, hosted by Whittlesey Angling Association. Match results were mixed, however some fine specimen fish were landed during the competition.

Club Reports – no match reports other than the National Pike Angling Championships have been received during the reporting period. Winter league match venues continue to favour the sheltered

swims along the Old River Nene through March Town centre and Benwick Village, both reaches showing signs of the good sport that is available on the Commissioners' watercourses.

World Angling Championships – the proposed bid to host the championships on the Commissioners' Main Drain was abandoned after Kings Lynn AA withdrew its offer to host the event due to a capital funding shortfall from the organising bodies.

Middle Level Waterways Users Committee - the Committee met on the 15th April and the 21st October 2016. They will meet again on 21st April 2017.

Conservation – this is covered in detail in the Environmental Officer's Report.

The Operations Manual – this is reviewed annually.

The Commissioners' and local Drainage Boards' Biodiversity Action Plans – are largely implemented and development of the next wave of plans is being prepared. As previously reported these are likely to have a heavy emphasis on data gathering and monitoring.

Conservation Committee - the Committee met on the 16th March 2016, 29th September 2016 and 16th March 2017.

Woodwalton Fen Alternative Storage – discussions on the removal and replacement of the flood storage facility linked with Woodwalton Fen continue, but a scheme and funding for it are still considered some way off. A scheme to raise the Fen's southern bank to reduce frequency of flooding is considered more imminent.

Great Fen General – a memorial service for the Spitfire pilot who crashed into what is now part of the Great Fen in 1940 was held on 15th September. The Chief Executive attended on behalf of the Commissioners.

Eel Studies – the Chief Engineer continues to Co-Chair an EA/IDB liaison group on behalf of ADA which is looking into the matter of eels and IDB pumping stations which have been identified as priority sites. Defra's position statement was withdrawn in May 2016. Its replacement is awaited but is being delayed due to Brexit. It is, however, understood that whilst the targets and approach will most likely remain unaltered the timeframes set have been removed, hence there is no limit on how long an asset can be out of compliance as long as it has an exemption from the EA. Works to improve or replace a station or remedial works on elements linked with the passage of water will, however, trigger the regulations and require consideration of how eel passage can be offered or improved.

Within the St Germans pond, and at the Station itself, eel movement monitoring and physical eel passage through pump trials have been carried out. As part of this exercise 21 eels were placed in the upstream intake of the Pumping Station and the pumps turned on. The findings have concluded that the pumps can be classified as eel friendly.

In the wider area eel research is throwing up some interesting findings which do tend to show the feelings of affected IDBs that, without a full understanding of eel movements, investment in solutions is likely to be wasteful. For this reason it was recommended that the Board supported calls for further research and continued to offer involvement in terms of staff time. The Commissioners resolved to contribute £500 towards this research at their November meeting. To date over £20K has been committed by IDBs towards this project.

Internal Drainage Board Works

Weed Control & Channel Maintenance

Inspections/advice/assistance – recommendations on weed control were made to 13 Internal Districts. Middle Level operatives undertook herbicide applications on 11 Internal Districts, as weather conditions allowed, on a contract basis during 2016/17.

Maintenance Dredging and Associated Channel Works – work was organised and co-ordinated in 14 Board's areas.

Pumping Station Maintenance

Service Visits – the Commissioners' engineers made 357 visits to IDB pumping installations to carry out routine inspections/maintenance and/or rectify breakdowns.

Other Maintenance Works – carried out, or in progress, at pumping stations:

Various IDB's	Automatic weedscreen cleaner repairs.
Bensons Pumping Station (Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB)	Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment and security fencing – complete.
Binnimoor Pumping Station (March East IDB)	Pump replacement – specification prepared, quotations obtained.
Burrowmoor Pumping Station (March Third DDC)	Telemetry system – specification prepared, quotation obtained, order placement in hand.
Cock Fen Pumping Station (Upwell IDB)	Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment - tenders prepared and returned.
Copalder Pumping Station (Benwick IDB)	Replacement discharge isolation valve and flap valve – quotes obtained damming of for survey in hand. Investigations of discharge valve fault and replacement alternatives – ongoing.
Curf Pumping Station (Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB)	Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment and security fencing – complete
Duncombes Pumping Station (March West & White Fen IDB)	Pump overhaul – complete
High Causeway Pumping Station (Swavesey IDB)	Telemetry system – specification prepared, quotation obtained, Board's decision awaited.
New Fen Pumping Station (Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley IDB)	Modification to delivery pipework due to surge chamber subsidence.
Nordelph Pumping Station (Upwell IDB)	Resolution of metering issues with SSE/UKPN – issue now appears resolved.
North Creek Pumping Station (March Fifth IDB)	Pump lifted for inspection – complete.
Over Pumping Station (Over & Willingham IDB)	Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment and security fencing modifications - tenders prepared and returned, order being placed. Installation planned for April 2017.
Pidley Pumping Station (Warboys, Somersham & Pidley IDB)	Replacement Pump Control Equipment and Telemetry system – complete
Polver Pumping Station (East Of Ouse Pover & Nar IDB)	Replacement level control equipment - complete
South Creek Pumping Station (March Fifth IDB)	Replacement level control equipment - complete
Stonea Fen Pumping Station (Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB)	Replacement inlet penstock – complete.

Upwell Fen Pumping Station
(Upwell IDB)

Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment - tenders prepared and returned.

Upwood Common Pumping Station
(Ramsey Upwood & Gt Raveley IDB)

Replacement inlet penstock – complete.

Westmoor Pumping Station
(Warboys Somersham & Pidley IDB)

Automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment and structural modifications – complete.

White Fen Pumping Station
(March West & White Fen IDB)

Replacement automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment, quotation obtained, Board's decision awaited.

Wimblington Common Pumping Station
(Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB)

Weedscreen Cleaner overhaul – complete

Periodic Electrical Testing – re-testing of fixed equipment and remedial works at IDB pumping stations continue as and when required.

Improvement Works

IDB Projects - progress is as follows:

Bensons Pumping Station
(Curf and Wimblington IDB)

Weedscreen cleaner installation - complete.

Catchment Improvement Works at A47
(Hundred of Wisbech IDB)

The Highways Authority has advised that it will be progressing a scheme design and then installation of an upsized A47 culvert. The EA has allocated money for 2016/17 for an IDB scheme. Business case under development.

Curf Pumping Station
(Curf and Wimblington IDB)

Weedscreen cleaner installation – complete.

Inlet Structures – modifications to inlet structures and access platforms.
(Hundred Foot Washes IDB)

Further phases expected.

Green Dyke Pumping Station replacement
(Ramsey, Upwood and Great Raveley IDB)

Financial assessment carried out to see what grant might be worth pursuing. Report to be issued.

Ransonmoor Pumping Station
(Ransonmoor DDC)

Major improvement – complete.

Stow Bardolph Pumping Station
(Downham & Stow Bardolph IDB)

Business case development for a replacement pumping station completed and grant approval received. Design work begun.

Washways Pumping Station
(Warboys, Somersham & Pidley IDB)

Major improvement - complete.

Work organised by the Works Department and carried out by Middle Level Labour - assistance has been given with the following:

Benwick IDB

Herbicide application to Board's drains.
Assist contractor with installation of replacement culvert in Board's Drain.
Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.
Fence repairs to Ibbersons Pumping Station.

Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's Drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p> <p>Assist contractor with 165m bank piling works to Board's drains (3 sites).</p>
March East IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p> <p>Remove fly-tipping from Board's drains.</p> <p>Assist contractor with bank piling works.</p>
March Fifth DDC	<p>Herbicide application to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Clear debris from weedscreen deck at South Creek Pumping Station.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing and bank trimming works to Commissioners' drains.</p>
March Sixth DDC	<p>Herbicide application to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Commissioners' drains.</p>
March Third DDC	<p>Herbicide application to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Remove maple tree at Gaul Road development site.</p>
March West & White Fen IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's drains.</p> <p>Assist Contractor with approximately 400m bank piling works.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p>
Needham & Laddus IDB	<p>Assist contractor with side culvert installation.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p> <p>Assist contractor with bank repair and piling works to Board's Drain at Laddus Bank.</p>
Nightlayers IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p> <p>Assist contractor to install approximately 25m timber piled revetment works.</p>
Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p>
Ransonmoor DDC	<p>Herbicide application to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Commissioners' drains.</p> <p>Sapling removal and disposal works.</p> <p>Remove fly-tipping from Commissioners' drains.</p>
Sawtry IDB	<p>Flail mowing Board's drains.</p>
Swavesey IDB	<p>Herbicide application to Board's drains.</p>
Waldersey IDB	<p>Assist contractor with installation of 2no.replacement culverts.</p> <p>Arrange and oversee machine cleansing works to Board's drains.</p>

Engineering Fees

Fees – the fee outlook for this next financial year again remains steady, with the largest income generators likely to be the design of the new Stow Fen Pumping Station scheme and Green Dyke Pumping Station.

ADA

Meetings - the Chief Engineer and Environmental Officer continue to attend the ADA Technical and Environmental Committee meetings. The Chief Engineer also continues to represent ADA on the BSi panel and EA/defra – national AMTAG (Asset Management Theme Advisory Group) and most recently the EA/IDB Eel Liaison Group.

The Annual ADA Conference – will this year be held on 16th November at One Great Georges Street, Westminster. Members who wish to attend should let the office know well in advance.

EA Sanctioned Project List

A list of the EA ‘Sanctioned Project List’ follows, covering all MLC and MLC consultancy projects for 2017/18:

Great Fen	Water Level Management Restoration Scheme
MLC	Bank Raising and Strategy Review
Downham and Stow IDB	Stow Pumping Station Replacement
March East IDB	Binnimoor pump replacement
Hundred of Wisbech	A47 downstream channel improvements
Ramsey, Upwood	Green Dyke Pumping Station Replacement
& Great Raveley IDB	

Renewable Power

At present the savings and FITs payments linked with the office PV cells installation remain ahead of predictions.

M Heading

Marc Heading
Chairman

16 October 2017