

C.937 Land Drainage Act 1991
Fenland District Council

Miss Ablett reported that Fenland District Council had re-appointed Councillor M Cornwell to be a Commissioner under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

Miss Ablett also reported that Councillor Court was not re-appointed.

C.938 Contingency Plans in the Event of Pump Failure

Further to minute C.898, Miss Ablett reported that the Consulting Engineer had advised that whilst the pump body and wet bolts could be inspected annually when the water levels were lowered, in his opinion, it was unlikely that the pump bolts had deteriorated as when the pump was last overhauled in 2007 they were replaced in stainless steel.

RESOLVED

That no further action be taken and this item be removed from future agendas.

C.939 Potential Amalgamation with March Fifth DDCs

Further to minute C.900, the Vice Chairman reported that when the potential amalgamation was discussed at the March Fifth DDC meeting there was no desire to continue with the process. She added that initially the main driver for amalgamating the Commissioners was due to lack of members attending meetings. She advised that now the numbers in attendance had increased the Commissioners did not consider there was a desperate need to merge. Mr Alerton agreed as he had spoken with the Chairman of March Third DDC who had confirmed that they were also of the same opinion.

Councillor Cornwell enquired whether there would be any financial implications. The Vice Chairman confirmed that there were potentially within March Third DDC as they had large sums of money in their funds and a very low rate, due to development within the District, however these funds would most likely be ring fenced and differential rating used.

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners do not proceed with any amalgamation and this item be removed from future agendas.

C.940 Updating IDB Byelaws

Further to minute C.908(e), the Commissioners considered their updated Byelaws.

RESOLVED

That the updated Byelaws be adopted.

C.941 Policy Statement

Further to minute C.908(f), the Commissioners reviewed and approved their Policy Statement which had been updated following the publication of the National Audit Office (NAO) report on IDBs in March 2017.

RESOLVED

That the revised Policy Statement be adopted.

C.942 Requirements for a Biosecurity Policy

Further to minute C.913, the Commissioners considered their Biosecurity Policy.

RESOLVED

That the Biosecurity Policy be adopted.

C.943 Waste Recycling Centre

Further to minute C.931, Mr Alerton reported that the site operator had recently contacted him and enquired whether he wished to lease the field/pond but he was waiting for them to confirm the amount of annual rent they would require before making a decision. He advised that should he decide not to rent the land the site operator had enquired whether the Commissioners would be interested. Mr Alerton confirmed there was a water storage resource on site, which could be used for irrigation purposes. Mr Lakey, the Middle Level Commissioners' Assistant Operations Engineer advised there was a possibility there was a natural spring in the bottom of the pond so it could well be self filling.

RESOLVED

That this item be included in the agenda for the next meeting of the Commissioners for the Vice Chairman to report and in the meantime Mr Alerton to liaise with the Chairman to keep him informed.

C.944 Norwood Pumping Station

Further to minute C.932, the Chairman reported that at a meeting held approximately two years ago, Sustrans had confirmed they did own the pit and some of the land around it. He advised that the Commissioners had indicated an interest in purchasing the pit and surrounding land but since then there had been no further communication.

C.945 Clerk's Report

Miss Ablett advised:-

i) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

That a second Chair's meeting was held on the 17th October 2018 and that discussions centred around meeting Health and Safety legislative requirements and the possible options

for increased efficiency in delivery of IDB/DDC services. Outline detailed proposals on the latter are to be brought before the next Chair's meeting for consideration.

That a third Chair's Meeting was held on the 11th March 2019 and that discussions at this centred around :-

- 1) The provision of increased support to IDBs on Health and Safety management and control.
- 2) The Future investment planning for the Lower River Great Ouse catchment.
- 3) Future planning for IDBs and DDCs administered by the Middle Level Commissioners.
- 4) Member training.

One option for future Board arrangements discussed at the second and third meetings was the subject of a briefing paper.

Miss Ablett referred to the briefing paper and reported that there were concerns within a number of Boards regarding membership; some Boards found it difficult to attract new Members, some struggled to obtain a sufficient number of Members to be in quorate, there were not many of the younger generation coming forward and the numbers of farms was reducing.

She confirmed that sub-committees could be formed to discuss any necessary drainworks so that local knowledge was retained and differential rating could be used to allow for any significant differences in rates. She also advised one of the aims was to reduce administration and save money.

The Chairman stated that savings would have to be significant to make the exercise worthwhile.

The Vice Chairman confirmed that local knowledge and input, together with differential rating would be required and if the driver behind this was based on the age and numbers of members then the proposed sub committees would face the same challenges.

Councillor Cornwell stressed that he considered the way forward should be to encourage smaller boards to amalgamate and once this proved satisfactory to all members of the Boards, they may then consider amalgamating into one Board at a later date. He considered amalgamating all Boards at this time would be a long and complex process.

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners have no interest in amalgamating at this time.

- ii) Association of Drainage Authorities
- a) Annual Conference

That the 81st Annual Conference of the Association had been held at the ICE building in Westminster on Wednesday 14th November 2018 and had been well attended with the main speakers being Sue Hayman MP, Shadow Secretary for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Robert Hössen crisis management expert from the Netherlands, John Curtin, Executive Director of Flood and Coastal Risk Management at the Environment Agency and David Cooper Deputy, Director for Flood and Coastal Erosion Management at Defra.

Sue Hayman Affairs spoke about her first-hand experience of flooding in Cumbria, the impact of flooding on mental health, building on flood plains and river management without environmental change and funding.

Robert Hössen gave a presentation on how incident management is organised and dealt with in the Netherlands.

John Curtin gave a presentation on the effects of climate change and referred to the government's discussions regarding the likelihood, impact and severity of climate change.

David Cooper referred to the 25 year environment plan and to various Government publications made in 2018, which can be viewed online.

That the Officers had been re-elected, subscriptions would be increasing by 2% for the following year and the Conference marked the launch of the Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Board Members.

That the Conference also marked the first presentation of the Chairman's award which were presented to Ian Russell from the Environment Agency for his work on Public Sector Co-operation Agreements and to Cliff Carson, former Environmental Officer of the Middle Level Commissioners and the Boards, for his work which was instrumental in changing views concerning conservation.

b) Annual Conference

That the Annual Conference of the Association of Drainage Authorities will be held in London on Wednesday the 13th November 2019.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a ticket for the Annual Conference of the Association for any Commissioner who wishes to attend.

c) Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse Branch

That the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association was held on Tuesday the 12th March 2019. The meeting format was changed this year and included a morning workshop session led by the EA. Topics covered were water resources, PSCAs and future planning of FRM. Robert Caudwell spoke for ADA in the afternoon followed by talks from Brian Stewart, the FRCC Chair, Paul Burrows, the FRM Area Manager and Claire Jouvray, the Operations Delivery Manager.

That the date of the next meeting is Tuesday the 3rd March 2020.

d) Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Board Members

That, at the Annual Conference last November, ADA launched the publication of the Good Governance Guide for IDB Board Members. It provides Members with a comprehensive guide to their role as water managers servicing the local communities. The document has been produced with the financial support of Defra and will provide Members with knowledge to help expand their grasp of the role, and how best to execute their responsibilities on the Board.

That a copy of the Guide for each Member has been included with this agenda and can be downloaded from the ADA website.

That ADAs workshops were well attended and are helping to deal with the questions being raised by Defra following the Audit Commission Report which criticized aspects of IDB governance. At least one Commissioner attended one of the two local workshops in the area and hence the Board will be able to record in the IDB1 Defra return that training has been provided on Governance. In addition to governance Defra appear to expect over time that training will be given for the following; Finance, Environment, Health, safety and welfare and Communications and engagement. The Commissioners may wish to consider an order of priority for future training and a timetable for delivery.

e) Workstreams

That ADA annually review their workstreams and an update is included.

iii) External Bodies Conservation Initiatives

That there are two projects which may have an impact on the Commissioners:-

a) The New Life on the Old West project being led by Cambs ACRE which aims to improve public understanding of the unique nature of biodiversity in the Fens and to deliver improvements on community green spaces and the ditch network. At the time of report the project has received a £100k grant to develop the project to the point at which a further £3/4 million grant bid will be made to support delivery.

b) The Cambridgeshire Fens Biosphere, Heritage Lottery have provided £10,000 of funding to research what would be necessary to bring Biosphere Reserve status to the Fens. This project is being led by the Wildlife Trust with support from Cambs ACRE. If successful, this would lead to a new UNESCO designation. This would be a non-statutory designation which records the unique nature of the area. Most recently, the project received £1m for field scale alternative farming trial works in the Great Fen area and to assist with the Biosphere bid.

iv) Catchment Strategy

That the EA, LLFA, IDBs and other partners are co-operating in a piece of work which is looking at the pressures on the catchment from a development and climate change perspective. The aim will be to develop proposals which will guide and inform discussion makers.

v) Water Resources East Group Meeting

That the Middle Level Commissioners are setting up a Committee to discuss how they can work more closely with Anglian Water and other partners to ensure that the management of water and the quantity taken from the River Nene can be maximized in stressed years.

vi) Anglia Farmers

Further to minute C.926, Miss Ablett advised that the running of the remainder of the Anglia Farmers electricity contract had been monitored and was pleased to report that the service provided had improved.

In view of the significant increase in prices observed a utility specialist was approached and like for like prices at the time of tender, for a sample of meters, were requested in order that a comparison could be made with the prices obtained by Anglia Farmers. Although some savings may have been made, overall the prices obtained from Anglia Farmers were found to be generally competitive.

A verbal report was presented to the Middle Level Commissioners at their last Board meeting and, based on the results of the pricing comparison exercise and in view of the service provided by Anglia Farmers having improved, the Middle Level Commissioners resolved to remain with Anglia Farmers for a further contract period post 30th September 2019.

The Clerk had recommended that the Commissioners also remain with Anglia Farmers. However, should the Commissioners wish to choose to end their current contract, notice was required to be given by late January/early February 2019 following which they would then be responsible for negotiating their own separate electricity contract thereafter.

Miss Ablett reported that the Chairman had subsequently agreed for the Commissioners to remain with Anglia Farmers.

RESOLVED

That the actions of the Chairman be approved and the Commissioners remain with Anglia Farmers for a further contract period post 30th September 2019.

vii) The New Rivers Authorities & Land Drainage Bill

That this Bill has completed its Committee stage in the House of Commons and passed through its Third Reading. It has now started its progression through the House of Lords.

The Bill, which has been prepared by Defra, aims to put the Somerset Rivers Authority onto a statutory footing as a precepting body, but it would also enable the reform of IDB ratings annual value lists. It does this by recognising the need to ensure that the methodology through which IDBs calculate and collect drainage rates and special levy sits on a sound legal basis that can be periodically updated to contemporary values better reflecting current land and property valuation.

With the above in mind ADA has been working with Defra and a number of IDBs to test a new methodology using contemporary valuation and Council Tax lists that could be applied via this legislative change.

viii) Environment Agency consultation on changes to the Anglia (Central) RFCC

That a consultation is taking place on the constitution of three RFCCs following a formal proposal for two new unitary authorities to be formed in Northamptonshire (West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire) has been submitted to the Government for consideration. If approved these authorities would come into existence on the 1 April 2020.

In Buckinghamshire the decision to create a single unitary authority replacing the existing five councils has been made by the Government, subject to Parliamentary approval. It would come into existence on the 1 April 2020.

Each new authority will be a unitary authority, delivering all local government services in their respective areas, including their functions as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFAs).

The membership of Thames RFCC, Anglian (Central) RFCC, and Anglian (Northern) RFCC currently includes representation from one or both of the existing county councils. To reflect the changes proposed the membership of all three RFCC will need to be varied before 1 December 2019.

At the same time to better reflect a catchment-based approach it is proposed to change the name of Anglian (Central) RFCC to Anglian (Great Ouse) RFCC. ADA has stated that it supports the naming revision.

C.946 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

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

March Sixth D.D.C.

Consulting Engineers Report – June 2019

Weed Control and Drain Maintenance

The maintenance works carried out last year generally accorded with the recommendations approved by the Commissioners' at their last annual meeting.

Roundup herbicide applications were applied to the Commissioners' drains included within last year's machine cleansing programme, and to other District drains where it was required to control dense stands of reed and emergent aquatic vegetation.



Handrail improvements at Norwood pumping Station

In order to comply with current Health & Safety policies, the District Officer has installed a removeable steel chain at the Commissioners' Pumping Station weedscreen deck. This is to prevent any slips or falls under the existing handrail. It was also noted that the access path around the pump control building and the steps down to the weedscreen are beginning to subside and deteriorate. The Chairman has requested that a quote for improvement works at the Pumping Station be provided and this will be presented to the Commissioners at their annual meeting.

A recent joint inspection of the Commissioners' District drains has been undertaken with the District Officer. The inspection revealed that the majority of drains are in a generally satisfactory condition and being maintained to a good standard. The inspection indicates that many of the District drains that fall within this year's machine cleansing programme will only require light machine cleansing to retain them in good status.

Drains to the West of the Prison

The Commissioners' District drains to the west of the prison are generally in good condition. The inspection did highlight sporadic growths of aquatic vegetation throughout many of the drains in the western area. It is recommended that the affected reaches are treated with an application of Roundup herbicide during the summer months, which should prevent any further infestations later on in the season.



EEDA Drain, reach 19-20

Drains to the East of the Prison

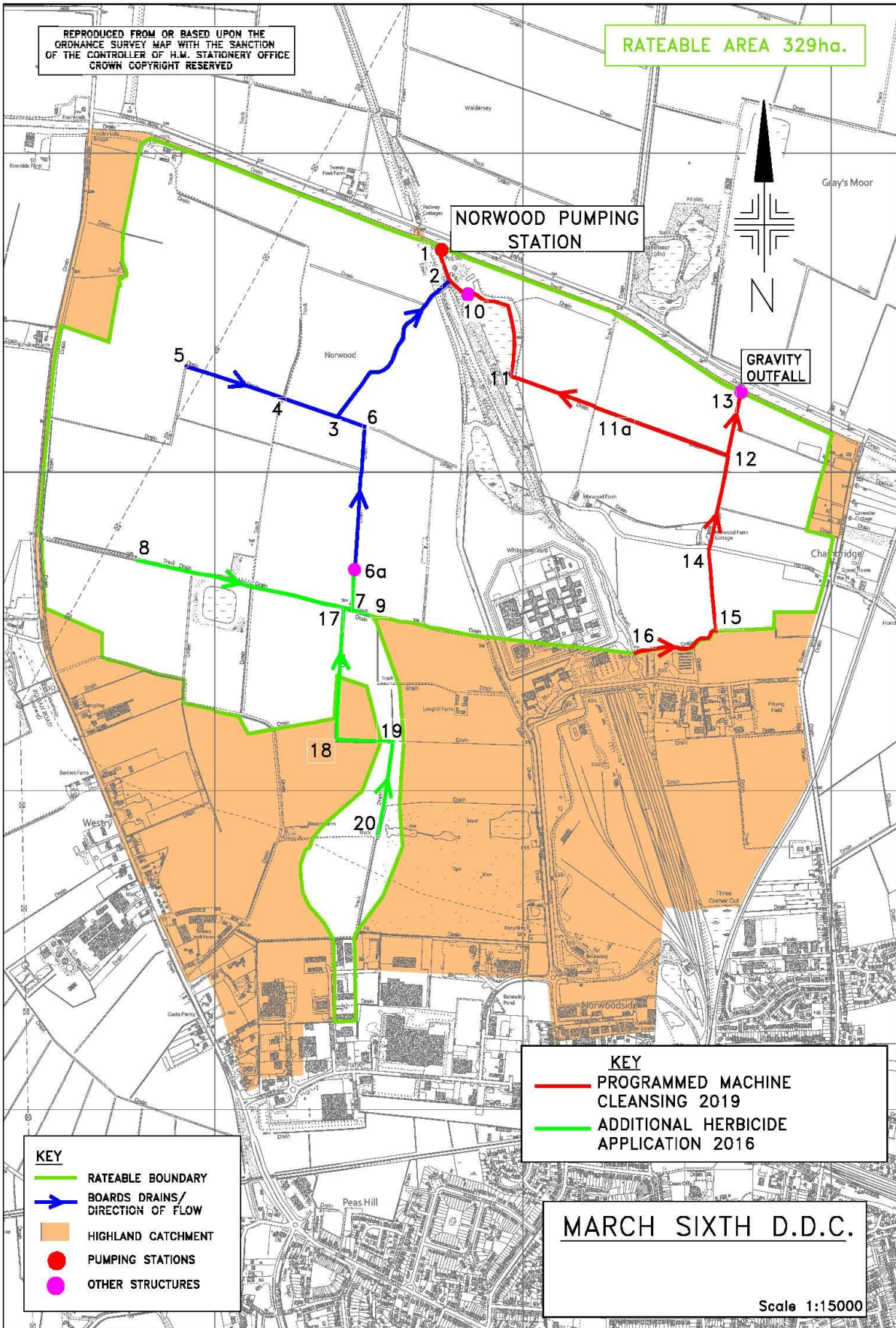
The District drains to the east of the prison remain in a generally satisfactory condition, however the inspection did reveal sporadic stands of reed and emergent aquatic vegetation in the Norwood Farm drains. As this area falls within this year's maintenance programme, the affected reaches will be treated with an application of Roundup herbicide, followed by light machine cleansing, to retain the currently good status.

As the Commissioners have previously agreed, in recent years, it is recommended that the main Norwood Pumping Drain, reach 1-2-10, is included within this year's phased machine cleansing programme. Historically this has proven to be an effective method of reducing the weed mass at the manually cleansed weedscreen during winter pumping periods.

A sum has been allocated within the Commissioners' estimate to allow for Roundup applications to be made to drains, as required, and for flail mowing of the District drains to be undertaken this year.

A provisional sum has also been included within the estimate for any other emergency machine cleansing, culvert clearance or cott removal works that may be deemed necessary later in the year.

The estimated costs of this year's recommended Weed Control and Drain Maintenance works are shown below, please refer to the following plan for locations.



The estimated costs of this year's recommended drain maintenance works are as follows:

Phased Machine Cleansing Programme

1. Drains to East of the Prison				
(i) Reach 11-11a-12	750	m @	1.10	825.00
(ii) Reach 13-12-14-15-16	1100	m @	1.10	1210.00
2. Machine cleanse Norwood Pump Drain	150	m @	1.10	165.00
3. Allow sum for Roundup application to control Japanese Knotweed at Norwood Pumping Station, if required, self-sown saplings and emergent aquatic weed within the Commissioners' drains	Item	Sum		750.00
4. Allow sum for flail mowing	Item	Sum		950.00
5. <u>Provisional Item</u> Allow sum for emergency machine cleansing or cott removal work	Item	Sum		700.00
6. Fees for inspection, preparation and submission of report to the Commissioners, arrangement and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works	Item	Sum		550.00
				£ 5,150.00

Orders for the application of herbicides by the Middle Level Commissioners are accepted on condition that they are weather dependant and they will not be held responsible for the efficacy or failure of any treatment.

Pumping Station

Other than matters reported below only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

The bearing lubrication pump recently became faulty and has been replaced.

At the last meeting it was requested that the pump body and wet bolts be inspected annually, when the water levels are lowered for machine cleansing. Whilst this can be carried out it is unlikely that the pump bolts have deteriorated as they were replaced in stainless steel when the pump was last overhauled in 2007.

The weedscreen is becoming corroded and is likely to soon require repairs or replacement.

Pumping Hours

Total Hours Run/ Pumping Station	May 12 - May 13	May 13 - May 14	May 14 - May 15	May 15 - May 16	May 16 - May 17	May 17 - May 18	May 18 - May 19
Norwood	(6058) - (6549) 491	(6549) - (6789) 240	(6789) - (7177) 388	(7177) - (7364) 187	(7364) - (7546) 182	(7546)- (7760) 214	(7760) (7909) 149

Planning Applications

In addition to matters concerning previous applications, the following 5 new applications have been received and dealt with since the last meeting:

MLC Ref.	Council Ref.	Applicant	Type of Development	Location
154	F/YR18/0453/F	Mr A Love	Agricultural	Elm Road, March
155	F/YR18/0761/F	Batchelor Developments Ltd & Litchfield Roofing Ltd	Business/Industrial/ Storage & Distribution (11 units)	Thorby Avenue, March*
156	F/YR18/0922/PNC04	Mr & Mrs C Baker	Residential (3 plots)	Wisbech Road, March
157	Enquiry	Mr A Dean	Residence	Church Gardens, Westry
158	F/YR19/0052/F	Mr A Dean	Residence (Extension)	Church Gardens, Westry

Planning applications ending 'PNC0' relate to prior notification change of use issues

A development that is known to propose direct discharge to the Commissioners' system is indicated with an asterisk. The remainder are understood to propose surface water disposal to soakaways/infiltration systems or sustainable drainage systems, where applicable. The applicants have been notified of the Commissioners' requirements.

For his agricultural building at Elm Road, March (MLC Ref No 154), Mr A Love chose to use the infiltration device self-certification process and, in doing so, agreed that if the device was to fail in the future he would be liable for discharge consent.

No further correspondence has been received from the applicants or the applicants' agents concerning the following developments and no further action has been taken in respect of the Board's interests:

- *Erection of industrial buildings hardstanding on land West of 30 Thorby Avenue, March – Elliott Charles Group (MLC Ref No 079 & 108) and RFGM Ltd (MLC Ref No 150)*
- *Residential Development on land north of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March – Prudential Property Investment Managers Ltd (MLC Ref No 065 & 078) and Grosvenor Partnership 3 LLP (MLC Ref No 142)*
- *Re-development of the former Brimur Packaging Ltd and Agrihold facilities at 1-3 Hostmoor Avenue and 1 Martin Avenue, March – Client of MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd (MLC Ref No 139) & Harrier Developments Ltd (MLC Ref No 143)*

In view of the absence of recent correspondence and any subsequent instruction from the Commissioners it will be presumed, unless otherwise recorded, that the Commissioners are content with any development that has occurred and that no further action is required at this time.

Residential development at Phoenix House, Wisbech Road, March – Mrs C Dean (MLC Ref Nos 117, 119, 124, 147 & 153), Shire Home Building Service Ltd (MLC Ref No 141) & Mr A Dean (MLC Ref Nos 157 & 158)

An enquiry was received from Mr A Dean concerning an additional dwelling in the Church Gardens development and the associated discharge consent required for it. As at the time of writing this report a response to the enquiry has been sent but a discharge consent application has not been received.

Extension to existing switches and crossings building and erection of lean-to to enclose house jet wash equipment at Whitemoor Yard, Hundred Road, March – Network Rail (MLC Ref No 126)

The requested meeting with Network Rail to discuss the issues concerning the site has yet to be arranged.

Erection of 13no business units for B1, B2 and B8 plus non-food retail warehouse with associated parking and erection of 1.8 (min) metre high security fence at land east of 33 Thorby Avenue, March – Mr & Mrs Fink (MLC Ref Nos 128 & 134) & Client of MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd (MLC Ref No 133)

Further to item (v) of minute C.901 Consulting Engineers' Report, following extensive discussions with the applicants and their engineering consultant, MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd, and also involving the Commissioners' solicitor it is understood that the applicant has confirmed that it will pay the associated contribution fee "... in six instalments over a period of six months."

An application for consent has been received and currently awaits processing.

Erection of up to 8 x dwellings on land south east of 433 Wisbech Road, Westry, March - Mr & Mrs J C & M A Martin (MLC Ref No 152)

Further to the last meeting it is understood that an appeal was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and that this appeal was dismissed in March.

Erection of 11 x business units (B1, B2 and B8) and 1.8m high palisade fencing and gates at land north of 57 Thorby Avenue, March – Batchelor Developments Ltd & Litchfield Roofing Contractors Ltd (MLC Ref No 155)

This planning application was submitted to the District Council in July for consideration.

A detailed assessment has not been undertaken but it is noted that the Flood Risk Assessment & Sustainable Drainage Strategy Ref. 2183 – DS dated July 2018 and submitted to FDC states that:

“Infiltration testing has taken place at the site, with a copy of the trial logs provided in Appendix 2. The trial holes were dug to 1.55m below ground level and filled with water to a depth of 300mm, however Trial Hole 1 failed drain more than 33% over a 19 hour period, whilst Trial Hole 2 drained just 40% over the 19 hour period. As such it is not considered that infiltration systems provide a feasible means of surface water discharge from the proposed development in this instance.”

However, it goes on to explain that “... the second option for discharge in line with the Drainage Hierarchy is for discharge to a surface water feature. Surface water discharge will therefore be to the IDB drain along the northern boundary of the site” and concludes that:

“Surface water will therefore be to the adjacent IDB drain along the northern boundary of the site, with post development discharge rates restricted using a 67mm diameter hydrobrake flow control to 2.0l/s with relevant contribution paid to the IDB.”

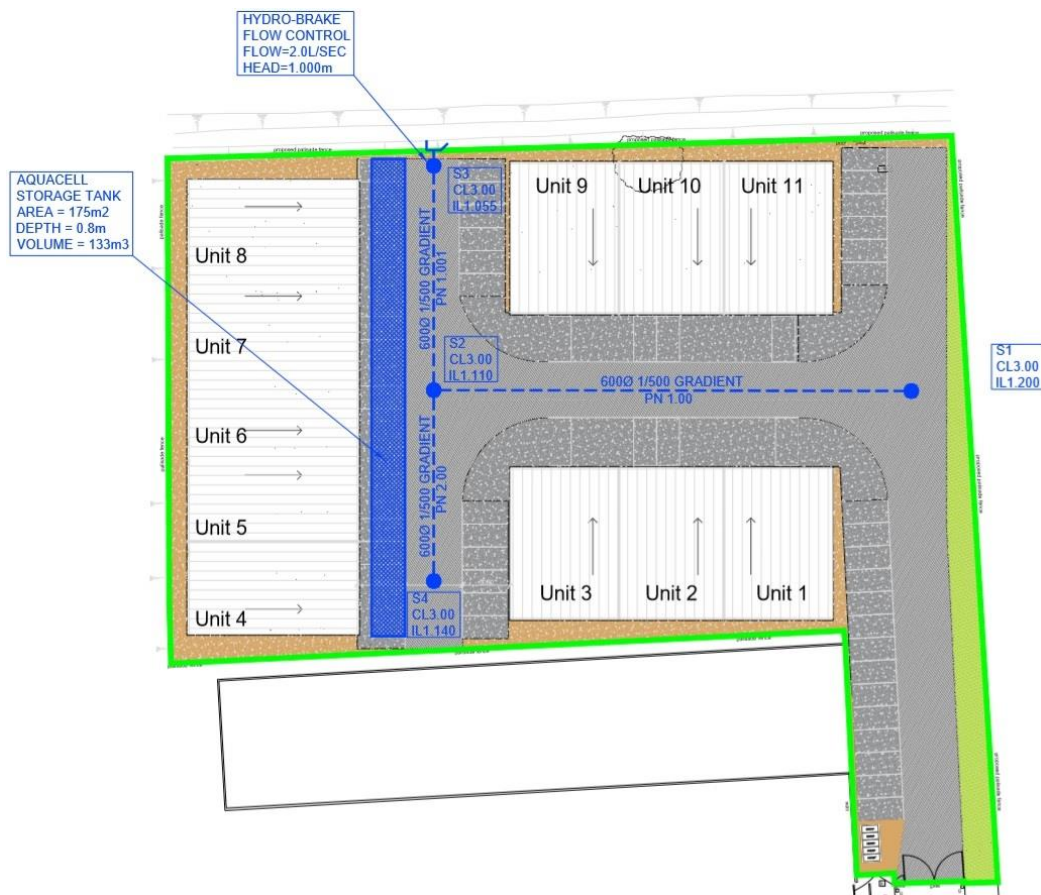
and

“Micro Drainage calculations demonstrate that by using 600mm diameter pipes, along with the incorporation of permeable paving and cellular storage systems located beneath the drainage system is able to provide sufficient capacity during all events up to and including a 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change rainfall event whilst restricting discharge to 2.0l/s.”

The County Council, in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), advised the District Council that it had no objection in principle to the development subject to the imposition of relevant conditions.

Planning permission was granted by the District Council in November.

To date, the applicant; its agent, Swann Edwards Architecture Ltd; and its engineering consultant, MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd, have not contacted the Commissioners to enquire whether this approach is acceptable or would be approved should the proposal proceed. An application for discharge consent, has not been received.



Extract from MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd Drawing No 2251-03 Rev – showing the Indicative Surface Water Drainage Plan

Therefore, in order to resolve this matter and guide further discussions it would be beneficial to receive the Commissioners’ opinion, further instruction and approval to initially write to the parties concerned in order to resolve this potential issue.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

The final report of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER), prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission (CPIEC) was published in September.

Jointly funded by the CPCA and Cambridge Ahead the report sets out how the CPIEC considers the area can sustain its own economy and support the UK economy whilst providing a better and more fulfilling way of life for the people who live and work in this area and details how this should be achieved, with fourteen key recommendations, and another thirteen subsidiary recommendations. Some of the suggested actions will be difficult to implement requiring close collaboration between leading institutions in the area, this is likely to include the relevant RMAs including the Commissioners and associated Boards, who will be needed to deliver them effectively.

Issues considered relevant to our interests include the following:

General

- a) The success of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a project of national importance.
- b) The Government should recognise the benefits further devolution to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would bring

Flood Risk and Water Level Management

- a) The area has not been subject to dramatic flooding events in recent years, which can mean the issue is paid little attention.
- b) Flood risk infrastructure should be considered enabling infrastructure, in that it allows a great deal of economic activity to happen in the first place (land being the most fundamental of all the economic factors of production).
- c) In the fens, water has an especially significant effect on the local economy with much of the area classified by the EA as being in flood zone 3 and this presents challenges to local economic development. Finding solutions to this problem is likely to have to happen little by little, with the finer points of detail being worked through with the EA, Anglian Water, and others. Wisbech should be seen as a UK testbed for new flood-resistant approaches to development, and levels of investment in flood defence infrastructure should be substantially increased.
- d) It is estimated that during a serious drought scenario, England could face £1.3billion of lost economic activity every day.
- e) A requirement of 110l per person per day should be enforced in water stressed areas, and that in future councils should have the power to enforce 80l per person per day requirements for new developments where appropriate.

The Environment

NB. 'Natural capital' refers to the stock of living ('biodiversity') and non-living (eg minerals, water) resources that interact and provide a flow of services ('ecosystem services') upon which society depends. Some of these services are delivered locally, others may have national or international value. All other capitals (human, social, intellectual, manufactured, financial) are ultimately underpinned by natural capital.

- a) Climate change is already having a damaging effect on biodiversity and could put a strain on the water supply.

- b) Within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, most districts were put into the middle band for levels of natural capital, although fenland (perhaps unsurprisingly) scores highly on this measure.
- c) The fens must also be considered as one of the UK's greatest natural assets with a rich wetland ecosystem which affords great leisure opportunities. The value of this natural capital must not be overlooked.

Economic Growth

- a) The Commission reached the conclusion that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area is not one, but three economies, the Greater Cambridge area, which includes Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, and parts of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire; the Greater Peterborough area, the area around Peterborough; and the fens but should function significantly more as a single area than it does at present. This ought to be feasible whilst being compatible with each part of the Combined Authority area retaining its distinctive sense of place.
- b) A distinguishing feature of the whole area is how strongly it continues to grow outpacing both the East of England and UK over the last decade. This has been driven primarily, but not entirely, by rapid business creation and growth in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, where knowledge-intensive sectors are strongly clustered, densifying and highly dependent on their location.
- c) Evidence from the review identifies that both employment and turnover growth have been picking up right across the area. Employment growth has seen strong growth numbers in all districts but has been highest in East Cambridgeshire. Looking at growth rates in the global turnover of companies based in the area between 2010/11-2016/17 all six districts have seen turnover growth of over 2% per annum. In South Cambridgeshire this rises to over 10% per annum, which shows impressive company growth.
- d) Many very large firms, such as McCain and Del Monte, have plants in the north-east of the county and export from here around the world. Figures show that primary sectors constitute 24% of East Cambridgeshire's turnover, and 17% of Fenland's with Wholesale and Retail Distribution making up 33% of Fenland's turnover, and 28% of South Cambridgeshire's.
- e) The Netherlands, which has similar prevailing conditions to the fens but produces much higher-value agricultural goods, should be seen as an exemplar.

- f) Laws governing planning permission may impede business growth.
- g) It is very important to support the growth of market towns.
- h) There is a need for companies to invest in their employees.
- i) There is potential for greater commercial office development, particularly in Peterborough.

Housing

- a) To account for the fact that actual delivery of housing has been less than previously predicted and if employment growth continues to be significantly above what is forecast it might be necessary to build in the range of 6,000 – 8,000 houses per year over the next 20 years.
- b) In some areas, particularly in the north of Cambridgeshire, house prices are too low to make sufficient profit from development, rendering them unviable.
- c) There is positive evidence that ecological considerations are being taken seriously in new developments, with the new Eddington District in Cambridge being a notable example. Eddington reuses surface level water, reducing wastage and minimising flood risk.

Infrastructure

- a) Utilities underpin all economic activity, and there are areas of concern, particularly regarding electricity capacity. The government has committed to banning new diesel and petrol vehicles from 2040, but if it is envisioned that these will be replaced by electric vehicles, substantial levels of investment into upgrading the grid will be needed.
- b) The importance that flood defence infrastructure and the equally clear stresses upon water in one of the UK's driest counties are recognised.
- c) The level of the infrastructure of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been inadequate for too long. The growth seen in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire seems very unlikely to be sustained in the future without further and significant investment in infrastructure.

- d) A package of transport and other infrastructure projects to alleviate the growing pains of Greater Cambridge should be considered the single most important infrastructure priority facing the Combined Authority in the short to medium term. These should include the use of better digital technology to enable more efficient use of current transport resources.

Projects that seem likely to further this aim are the full dualling of the A47, better connecting the Peterborough economy to the Fenland economy; the A10, better connecting the Cambridge economy to the Fenland economy; and improvements to rail between Peterborough and Cambridge, particularly the Ely North junction thus better connecting all three economies.

- e) There should be greater awareness of potential supply chains and scope for collaboration within the region.
- f) It was suggested that several elements were needed to underpin the approach to financing infrastructure:
- An Investment Fund should be created to execute priorities which leverages third party resources, meaning a sustainable momentum can be achieved by the prudent use of public resources (from both local and central government)
 - An Investment Pipeline should be established showing what is feasible to be delivered over a three, five, and ten-year period
 - A Mayoral Development Platform (such as a development corporation) is needed to facilitate and support development in collaboration with the private sector (investors and developers) and wherever practicable the community in which development takes place.
 - Relevant RMAs possibly including the Commissioners and associated Boards may be asked to contribute to these.

Fenland District Council (FDC)

FDC Liaison Meeting

A follow up meeting was held on 28 March.

Planning Committee Decision at Estover Road, March

Members may be aware of the District Council's decision in relation to the outline planning application for a residential development at Estover Road, March. However, members may be interested in the principles established at the Committee Meeting in respect of the Board's interests.

The March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners requested that the Planning Engineers represented them at the Planning Committee's September meeting.

It was interesting to note that the Commissioners' presence was acknowledged with one Councillor stating that as the Commissioners have made the effort to attend the Committee should listen to them. Another comment made was that the Committee is concerned that Statutory Consultees do not attend the Planning Committee Meetings.

There was considerable support for the Drainage Boards particularly from Cllrs Bligh, Laws and Newell, but you will note the comments which were quite rightly made by Cllr Sutton and Nick Harding.

In view of this it appears that, within Fenland at least, the comments of the LLFA, as a Statutory Consultee, override that of the Commissioners, even though they have to receive and transfer any flows and deal with any resultant problems at their ratepayers' expense.

Relevant extracts from the minutes from the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 12 September are copied below:

"F/YR15/0668/O

LAND NORTH OF 75-127, ESTOVER ROAD, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

OUTLINE WITH ONE MATTER COMMITTED DETAILED AS ACCESS IN RELATION TO 95 NO DWELLINGS (MAX) WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, DRAINAGE AND OPEN SPACES

Middle Level Commissioners strongly object to the application.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the public participation from Mr Graham Moore (Middle Level commissioners), who was speaking on behalf of Middle Level Commissioners and March Fifth Internal Drainage Board [sic] and Mrs Liz Whitehouse, who were both speaking in objection to the Application.

It is the IDB not the Environment Agency, FDC, CCC or Anglian Water, which has to receive and transfer flows that emit from the site.

The site is located in flood zone 1 and the applicant has provided information to evidence that surface water from the development can be managed and there have

been no objections from the Lead Local Flood Authority and Environment Agency who are statutory consultees. The Middle Level Commissioners are not statutory consultees; however the queries that have been raised by them have been looked at by the applicant but as this is an outline planning application and it would not be reasonable to supply the information requested currently and the details relating to the design of the scheme and details regarding the drainage scheme details are unknown. The condition that the LLFA have requested will put an appropriate safeguard in place to ensure a suitable strategy is established prior to the commencement of construction.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Laws stated that it is a windfall site but the drainage issue is an area of concern. With regard to viability, the site does not deliver what it should and although the Section 106 Officer has looked into this. The development is therefore less sustainable than it should be.*
- Councillor Sutton stated that he believes the development is sustainable. It is in flood zone 1 and the Lead Local Flood Authority who is a Statutory Consultee has no objection to the proposal. The issues concerning the discharge raised by Middle Level Commissioners and the IDB can be reviewed at a later stage and do not need to be considered today. Planning Committee Members have to make decisions on material planning reasons. The proposal does not go against the Neighbourhood Plan; if it did then Officers would not be recommending it for approval.*
- Councillor Sutton stated he can see no material planning reason to refuse the application.*
- Nick Harding stated that in terms of the surface water issues which have been raised. The IDB have recognised that the LLFA is the authority that we should be going to in consideration of these matters and if the NPPF is referred to it does state that major development should incorporate sustainable drainage systems and should take account of the advice of the LLFA. The advice from the LLFA is that this development proposal with conditions is acceptable.*
- Nick Harding stated that he is very supportive of the IDB's they have a separate legal process which has to be complied with by persons who wish to discharge their surface water and just because planning permission is granted for a development it does not mean they are automatically going to get consent from the IDB's. The Developer still has to apply to the IDB and the detail for the scheme has to be agreed.*
- Nick Harding stated that with regard to Anglian Water, they have raised no objection to this application. They have indicated that they will make necessary improvements to their network to ensure they can deal with the water and therefore as we do not have an objection from Anglian Water, and members should consider on what basis would we be able to defend a reason for refusal based on foul water capacity.*

Following the meeting the Planning Engineer advised the Clerk to the Commissioners that:

“Whilst I was concerned when we originally stood back and stopped making bespoke responses to the LPA in preference to writing to the applicant and/or agent, which does cause some problems, the planning decision confirmed that this choice was the correct one, as the Commissioners and associated Boards are not wasting their limited resources by issuing letters that will be ignored by the LPA. However, this procedure is, under the current circumstances, potentially wasteful as the developer, LPA and LLFA could put considerable effort into an application which may be granted planning permission but which a Board refuses to consent.”

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)

Public Consultation on the Draft Cambridgeshire Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) document

No further correspondence has been received in respect of this document.

Consultation on the proposed 2019 revision of the Local Validation Guidance List & Local Validation Check List for planning applications for the County Council’s own development & for waste development

A Public Consultation on the proposed 2019 revision of the Local Validation Guidance List and Local Validation Check List for planning applications for the County Council’s own development and for waste development was held from 28 February until 11 April.

The consultation responses received have been taken into consideration by the County Council and some additional revisions made to the proposed Validation List and Guidance Notes will be presented to the Planning Committee meeting on Thursday 16 May 2019 to seek approval for them.

A response was submitted to the County Council on behalf of both the Commissioners and our associated Boards, for whom we provide a planning consultancy service. It was pleasing to note the inclusion of the Middle Level Biodiversity Manual (2016) and the reference and a link to our “Planning Advice and Consent Documents” within the Guidance Notes.

Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Partnership (CFRMP)

The Middle Level Commissioners’ Planning Engineer has represented both the Middle Level Commissioners and their associated Boards since the last Board meeting. The main matters that may be of interest to the Board are as follows:

Quarterly Meetings

The most recent meeting was a joint meeting held with the Peterborough Flood & Water Management Partnership (PFLoW) of which the MLC are also a partner. The number of meetings held each year may reduce from four to three.

Flood risk activities: environmental permits (formerly flood defence consents)

The Environment Agency's (EA) new Environmental Permitting Charging Scheme can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permitting-charging-scheme>. Early engagement with the EA is recommended as a slight redesign of the proposal may reduce the fees required.

Riparian Responsibilities

There has been discussion about issues concerning land owner's responsibilities on riparian "private" watercourses and the amount of time and resources that are taken up by various RMAs, including the Board, in dealing with riparian issues.

It was suggested that a recommendation be made to the RFCC. The options being considered are to do nothing; seek Government Support; or undertake an awareness campaign in the Public Domain with The Law Society, Local Government members etc. It is accepted by the partner members that some initial investment in time and resources may be required to progress these items further.

Discussions included the "Owning a watercourse" webpage, which replaced the Living on the Edge booklet, this is considered to be a backward step as the information that can be presented on the .gov.uk website is very limited.

The webpage can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>.

Hedge and Ditch Rule

Following a problem in the area covered by the Ely Group of IDBs this "common law" ruling that is mainly used to determine boundaries disputes and the requirements of the Land Drainage Act, notably Section 25, is currently being discussed with various parties including the former Commissioners' and Boards' Clerk, Iain Smith.

The latest ruling which dates to 2015 can be downloaded from the Mills and Reeve website, which can be found at <https://www.mills-reeve.com/boundaries-and-the-hedge-and-ditch-rule-12-07-2015/>

Bank Instability - Environment Agency (EA)/IDB approach

The EA and IDBs advised on their respective position in respect of reinstating channels that have failed. These are largely the same but due to cost constraints the EA now only stabilises channels where there are raised embankments.

For Award Drains the wording of the Award needs to be considered. Some refer to the landowner and not the Authority concerned.

IDB & LLFA Planning Process

An update was given on the LLFA's discussions with North Level and District IDB, the Ely Group and the Middle Level Commissioners in order to attain a collective approach where possible.

However, it was explained that all three authorities have different approaches to some items and that any discussions with the planning authorities and agents may be iterative.

The LLFA/AWSL/MLC Liaison meeting was briefly discussed. The EA expressed an interest in joining this group.

Emergency Planning & Response

A draft flooding newspaper article and a flood call questions template, for completion by reception staff when receiving a flooding related call, is currently being prepared by a member of the Flood & Water team.

Skills & Apprenticeships

The Government is promoting the use of Apprenticeships and it is noted that many authorities are using these in preference to other forms of training.

It is understood that the EA, together with other partners, is developing a new Apprenticeship Standard for Water Environment Workers in England. This aims to support the training and development of workers who carry out operational activities in organisations where there is a responsibility to manage the impact of water environments, natural or manmade, on the land and surrounding businesses and homes. The water environment includes rivers, coasts (the sea), lakes, wetlands, canals and reservoirs.

County Council Public Sector Services

In addition to undertaking its role the group was advised that the Flood & Water Team may be extending its service to another County Council. The Commissioners' Planning Engineer has raised concerns with the County Council's Flood Risk and Biodiversity Business Manager about the potential deterioration of service within Cambridgeshire as a result.

RMA support & the Delivery of projects

Following concerns raised by IDBs and other RMAs the EA Local Levy is funding two LLFA and IDB Flood Risk Advisors who have been recruited to assist in the delivery of projects. Based at Ely they are the Commissioners'/Boards' point of contact in respect of FDGiA funding.

Initial meetings with the relevant advisor and the MLC staff have occurred.

RMA's Medium Term Programmes (MTP)

The RFCC has expressed a keen interest in knowing more about the different projects that partners in Cambridgeshire have put forward to the MTP for FDGiA. This is in part because the RFCC wants us to all understand each other's projects better. They would particularly like it if the RFCC Member Councillors for each County were familiar with all of the projects in their area and were able to champion them, not just the ones from their own organisation.

Therefore, the various relevant RMAs will be making presentations at Partnership meetings. As a result, as the largest promoter of such projects within Cambridgeshire, a presentation on the MTP prepared by the Middle Level Commissioners and its associated Boards has been made to the Partnership.

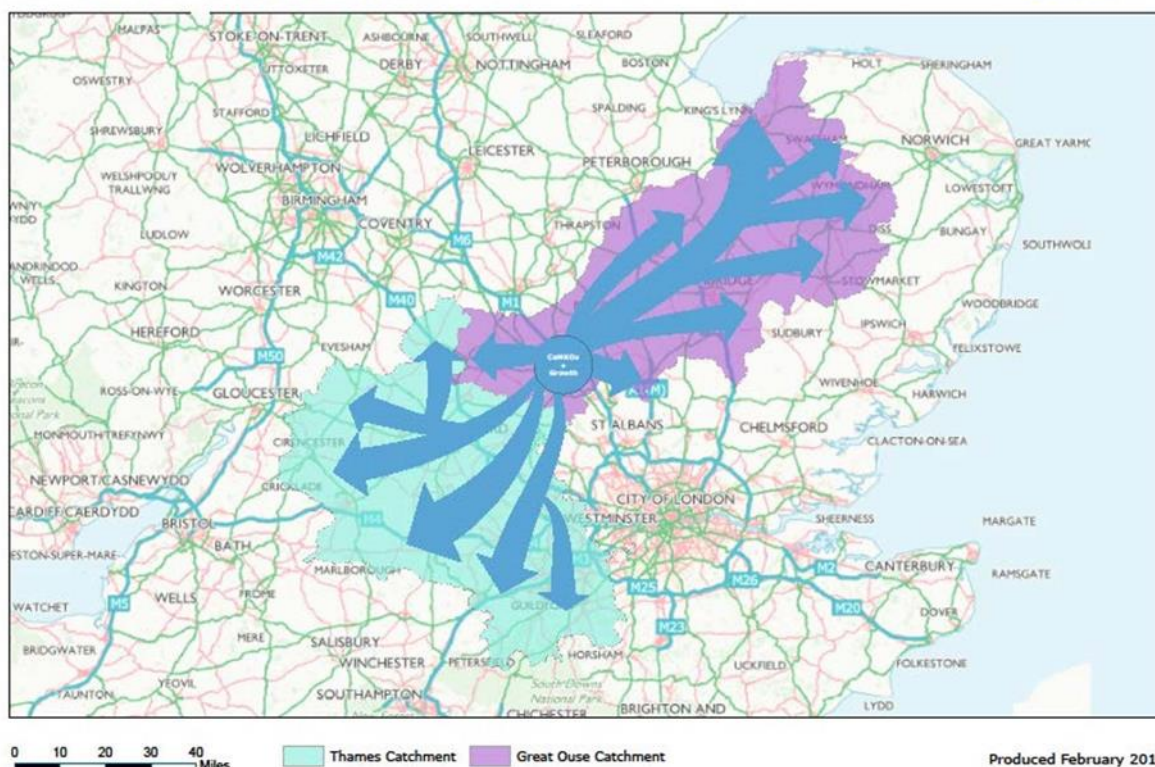
Rain Gauges

The Rain Gauge Network Project is progressing with the installation of gauges being undertaken in the next financial year.

Update on RFCC's Growth Work

In order to accommodate the projected "growth", 500,000 new homes within the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford (CaMKOx) arc, within the Great Ouse Catchment five Local Choices papers are currently being prepared on The Upstream Great Ouse Catchment, these will investigate the following:

- (i) Potential storage;
- (ii) Conveyance Study of the Main rivers to Denver Sluice, (this will investigate pinch points, silt deposition etc);
- (iii) A Modelling Workshop, (to use existing models as work needs to be completed now);
- (iv) An Economic Assessment, (this will include an assessment of Cost/Benefits and what it does to prevent flooding); and
- (v) The Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Link, (which will investigate potential benefits, water transfer/resources of the proposed new waterway between Kempston and the Grand Union Canal).



The EA is looking for RMA involvement in the production of these papers.

Flood Risk Management Trainees

As part of closer partnership working, training has been given to junior members of Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council staff and an undergraduate studying for a FRM degree under the EA foundation scheme. The main purpose of the training was to give the candidates a better and broader understanding of water level and flood risk management and also how the Middle Level Commissioners and associated Boards/Commissioners operate.

Feedback from both the candidates and internally has been positive and it is hoped that this opportunity can be offered again when the occasion arises.

One of the trainees wrote an article which was published in the Winter 2018 edition of the ADA Gazette. The article can be found at

<http://flickread.com/edition/html/index.php?pdf=5c101ead23d6e#13>

IDB Good Governance Guide/East Ridings of Yorkshire Council Guide

Matters raised by the East Ridings of Yorkshire Council, who had governance concerns over IDBs within its area of jurisdiction, were briefly discussed.

It is understood that correspondence was copied to all LLFAs and that Cllr Steve Count (Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council) provided a response which advised that the County Council had good partnerships with IDBs in the County.

ADA has subsequently launched its Good Governance for IDB Members guide at the ADA Conference which is primarily aimed at new Board members. Five workshops were held during March and April.

Further details on the guide and the workshops can be found at the following link

<https://www.ada.org.uk/2018/11/ada-publishes-guide-to-good-governance-for-internal-drainage-board-members/>

The EA's 2018 Flood Action Campaign

Research undertaken by the EA in conjunction with the Red Cross reveals that most 18-34 year olds do not know what to do in a flood. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-people-most-at-risk-in-a-flood-warns-environment-agency-british-red-cross>

Highways England (HE) Environmental Designated Funds (Legacy funding)

This is one of five funds provided by HE associated with the Strategic Road Network – A1, A14, A47 etc., the others being Cycling, safety and integration, Air Quality, Innovation and Growth and Housing.

The potential environmental funding is available for the following areas noise, water, carbon, landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage and, therefore, could include flooding, pollution, water framework directive and biodiversity projects associated with the Strategic Road Network – A1, A14, A47 etc. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/highways-england-designated-funds>

This method of funding is being utilised by the following RMAs on the projects below:

(a) Environment Agency

Beck Brook at Girton - Legacy Fund and Local Levy match funding is being used to assist a flood alleviation scheme that was unable to achieve GiA.

Borrow Pits at Fenstanton – A potential flood alleviation scheme may be able to use Legacy funding.

(b) Cambridgeshire County Council

Bar Hill – Legacy funding for a potential £64k scheme.

Histon/Impington culvert replacement – The Legacy funding contribution is possible due to the site's close location to the A14.

Fenland Flooding Issues Sub-group

Meetings were held in November and April. There are currently no known issues within the Commissioners' catchment.

An Update to the original 2014 March Flood Investigation Report, following the floods of August 2014, has recently been issued and can be found at the following link <https://ccc-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/March%20flood%20investigation%202019.pdf?inline=true>.

The March Community Flood Group is being re-promoted as the EA's funding and resources permit. It is hoped that a workshop will be held during the year.

Re-Opening of The March – Wisbech Railway

Members will be aware that the re-opening of the railway forms a key part of the Wisbech Garden Town proposal but as this primarily affect areas to the west of the River Nene, the Hundred of Wisbech IDB has not been directly involved in recent discussions. However, in respect of a water level and flood risk management scheme within the above-mentioned Board a representative from Network Rail has confirmed that “there is a programme to liven up the Wisbech Goods branch line in the future.”

The Commissioners may not be aware that if the rail line re-opens many of the numerous crossings along its length will be closed. Conscious of this, guidance has been sought from the County Council who employed Mott MacDonald to undertake its GRIP 2 report. The Council's Executive Director, Place and Economy advised that:

“In terms of the first of your questions, it is difficult to be precise on an opening date which would depend on the viability of the scheme and the availability of funding, both of which still require a significant amount of work. My view therefore, is that if the scheme were to go ahead, it would be unlikely to be before mid-2020s. Others may have different views, but railways, even re-openings are complex and take a long time.

In terms of the crossing, the standard Network Rail approach is to remove them in improvement or re-opening schemes so I think it would be fair to assume that this will not remain. That said, one of the areas of debate on the costs is the impact of all the crossing closures and so I think there will be pressure on NR to retain some and thus reduce costs. As a worst case though, I suggest you assume it will be closed”.

A copy of the GRIP 2 Report can be viewed at the following link:

https://ccc-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/March_to_Wisbech_GRIP_2_Study_Report_B.pdf?inline=true

Flood Risk Management (FRM) for the Fens Technical Group [previously reported as the Future Fenland Project]

The EA has recently commenced the FRM for the Fens Project to determine the best way of managing future flood risk. As a result a technical group has been formed, including representation from the Middle Level Commissioners.

The project was discussed at the EAs Large Projects Review Group (LPRG) meeting in November. The LPRG stated that all partners who seek future Flood Risk Management Grant-in-Aid (GiA) funding but do not share its data for the Baseline Report are likely to be denied, or capped to 45%, as they will not be able to demonstrate a strategic approach.

The project is currently at the data collection stage and details of the Board's system and any hydraulic models are being collated to inform the successful consultant, who will be appointed to progress Phase 1 of the project.

A letter from the EA has been issued to the Chairman and a copy follows for your information. This included a copy of the "elevator pitch", used by the EA to provide some background to the project. Please note that the extent of the geographical area shown has recently been amended.

Consulting Engineer

6 June 2019

March Sixth (315)\Reports\June 2019

creating a better place
for people and wildlife



Letter to Chairman
Internal Drainage Boards
Middle Level Offices
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambs
PE15 0AH

Our ref: ENV0000678C
Your ref
Date: 15 January 2019

Dear Chairman

Flood Risk Management for the Fens

Between Local Internal Drainage Boards and the Environment Agency, we are modern day custodians of arguably the richest legacies of flood risk and drainage management in the country. I am sure you and your Board are really proud, like I am, to have a responsibility for critical infrastructure within a landscape that is hugely important for the economy, communities, food, farming and the natural environment.

The future of the Great Ouse Fens is something I am passionate about and with IDB clerks and engineers we are starting a partnership and collaborative approach to their future flood management. This letter summarises where we are and some of the important steps ahead. We really need your ideas, enthusiasm, advocacy, support and knowledge about this fantastic part of the country.

In recent years flood and drainage management in the Fens has been undertaken in somewhat of a piecemeal approach and reactive manner. With climate change projections and many of our assets coming to the end of their design life, we now collectively need to take a more strategic and long term approach. This will enable us all to maximise financial leverage and present a stronger more considered investment case to funding bodies.

Flood risk management for the Fens is a project set up to consider what the future flood risk management choices for the Great Ouse Fens could look like. This will help us develop a strategic approach together that will underpin and frame all flood and coastal risk management investment in the Fens moving forward. This is a key requirement of Defra's partnership funding policy (see attached note).

The attached document provides further details about the project, including the details of those flood risk management organisations involved in the Technical Group. David will hopefully have already briefed you on this work and will be your primary engagement link as the project moves forward.

customer service line 03708 506 506
gov.uk/environment-agency

Supported by the Anglian (Central) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and with the help of the Technical Group, we have recently secured a funding package and obtained financial approval for Phase 1 of the project. The main products of this phase includes:

- A baseline report to gain a shared understanding of all land drainage and flood risk management assets, the economics, government grant eligibility level and partnership funding challenge for all sources of flooding. *This will be presented in a similar way to the Great Ouse Tidal River Baseline Report (we can provide a copy if you don't already have one) Anticipated delivery date Feb 2020.*
- Visualisation tools to showcase the findings of the baseline report in a way that informs and excites a wide variety of audiences. *Anticipated delivery date late 2020 after the baseline report to share key messages from the report.*

For Phase 1 we have not sought financial contributions from individual IDBs within the Great Ouse Fens, however the success of the work and effective use of the funding we have secured is hugely dependent upon the timely provision of asset and financial data from all Risk Management Authorities. Since July 2018, we have been working as part of the Technical Group on the specification and provision of this data.

We are aiming to appoint consultants for Phase 1 by early February 2019 and we are keen to have this data before then. Therefore it is vital that we have your support in helping your clerks and engineers to provide this information in a timely manner and by the 21 January 2019.

This will enable the project to move forward efficiently avoiding abortive costs, and help us to continue to support your IDB in seeking FCRM Grant in Aid (GiA) for individual investments. If we have gaps or deficiencies in the data then we will not be developing a strategic approach and are unlikely to be successful in maximising FCRM GiA funding for future projects.

Alongside Phase 1 we also collectively need to start to plan for Phase 2 of this work. Phase 2 is likely to start in approximately 5 years' time and most likely be a strategic options appraisal, to identify the choices for medium and long term flood risk management in the Fens.

Amongst the many benefits of this work, it will help us all better inform, influence and justify the source, nature and levels of funding required to

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for people and wildlife



evolve and manage flood and drainage infrastructure over the medium and long term. The scope and governance arrangements for Phase 2 will all need to be developed and agreed collaboratively and there is no presumption that the Environment Agency will lead.

Initial estimates from similar projects are that Phase 2 may cost in the region of £10 million to £15 million, and significant levels of partnership funding will be needed to be sourced to unlock and complement FCRM GiA. Therefore an investment strategy will be developed in parallel to Phase 1. Your Board may want to consider sooner rather than later how they choose to plan for this.

In the short term, whilst the strategic work is progressing, we all still need to continue to invest in the flood and drainage infrastructure within the Fens, without prejudicing any medium and long term choices. To frame this and support investment decision making in being as effective and efficient as possible, through the Technical Group we are also developing tactical plans for the Fens. These are looking at how we apportion benefits across respective infrastructure and apply these to upcoming investments. Once these are ready it may be useful to present to your Board.

It is a really interesting and exciting time with all this work. I hope you and your Board are supportive of the approach. If you have any questions or would like further information then please contact David, myself or our Project Executive, Claire Bell (Claire.Bell@Environment-Agency.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Paul Burrows".

MCIWEM CWEM CEnv

Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for East Anglia Area (Great Ouse catchment inc North West Norfolk coast)

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January 2019

The Strategic Approach for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Projects

Supplementary Local Guidance Version 1

In both Defra Policy Statements (Appraisal of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management June 2009 and Partnership Funding May 2011) demonstrating and evidencing a strategic approach to flood or coastal erosion risk is a requirement for every project, to ensure value for money for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid (FCERM GiA).

Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs) and Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) form the large scale holistic view of risk management requirements at the catchment or coastal process scale, beneath which more detailed strategies, and the local scale risk management activities should be developed.

Primarily, all schemes seeking FCERM GiA allocation should be in line with or compliment any overarching strategic plan such, for example, the Great Ouse CFMP.

“SMPs or CFMPs will have collected information on the economic, environmental and social assets at risk, the defences or coast protection works that are in place and identified preferred policies. The SMP or CFMP will also have engaged with stakeholders and you may be able to draw some information from the results. Early links need to be made with SMPs or CFMPs and strategies (where applicable) as they may have already identified key issues and broad solutions (in CFMPs these are called generic responses). It is essential to link the problem back to the policy as defined in the SMP or CFMP (and for schemes, to the description of the strategy, where available) to ensure continuity is not lost. Any conflicts between the description of the problem for your project and the recommendation of the SMP or CFMP (or strategy) will need to be highlighted and reconciled before you can progress further.” - Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Appraisal Guidance, 2010.

The meaning of a ‘strategic approach’ is described throughout the FCERM Appraisal Guidance, March 2010, mainly in Chapter 3. It needs to include consideration of wider factors such as the economic, environmental, recreational and social factors that may affect or be affected by the proposed investment opportunity. These wider factors will then subsequently influence the selection of investment options to manage or mitigate the flood or coastal erosion risks. At the early stages of appraisal a wide range and broad portfolio of options should be identified, such as a change in pumping regimes, storage options and combining flood cells and assets for example. These options should be appropriate to the scale and type of project being undertaken.

Any strategic evaluation should be done as early as possible when planning a FCERM project. Findings should be evidenced within the business case, however, as this is produced much later than the initial project submission is submitted to the Environment Agency (through PAFS) it may be required that evidence of a strategic approach be made available to the Environment Agency on request in advance of the programme refresh. Failure to submit such evidence on request, will result in the maximum grant rate for the scheme being reduced to 45%.

“Where there is not a clear strategic approach setting out how benefits are apportioned to individual investments within a system of assets, the maximum grant rate allowable will be reduced to 45%. This means that all risk management authorities, including internal drainage boards, could receive up to 100% grant levels. The reduced grant rate, relevant for all risk management authorities, helps preserve value for money in cases where investments may only score well because benefits are being double-counted.” – Partnership Funding Policy 2011

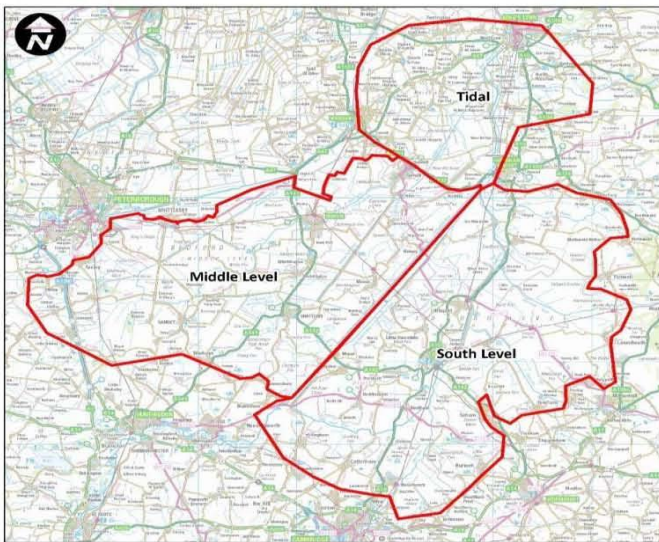
It is understood that there is a significant variation in the types of schemes which may be eligible for FCERM GiA funding. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the attention given to investigating a strategic approach should be proportional to the size of the scheme. Therefore, for smaller schemes (affecting a lower number of outcome measures and/or seeking a smaller sum of funding) a discussion of how a scheme aligns with a strategic approach may suffice. This could be evidenced, for example in notes accompanying a PAFS submission or captured within meeting minutes held in the early planning stages. Similarly, a larger scheme will require a more substantial demonstration. Any such scheme should be able to include, or reference any strategic analysis prior to PAFS submission or annual programme refresh.

This guidance reinforces the Defra Policy Statements ([Appraisal of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management June 2009](#) and [Partnership Funding May 2011](#)), if these National policies change in the future, this guidance will be amended accordingly.

Flood risk management for the Fens – planning together for a sustainable flood risk future

'Flood risk management for the Fens' is a project that has been set up to plan the best way of managing future flood risk in the Great Ouse Fen Area. We are currently in the **first phase** of this project which is developing a shared understanding of the situation and challenges for managing flood risk (from all sources) in the Fens.

A Technical Group (TG) has been formed of organisations (see below) who have **flood risk assets**, or represent those with assets, in the geographical area that has been defined as the Great Ouse Fens.



We are **working together** to set out all the data about flood risk in the area outlined – defining who is managing flood risk, asset maintenance costs and potential available Flood Risk Management Grant in Aid (Government funding). This will identify any difference in **investment needs versus available funding**.

The most important outcome for the first phase of work is for the TG to have a **shared understanding** of the issues and challenges for managing flood risk in the Fens, and to have a **shared ownership** for taking action to overcome these issues.

Pressures on the Fens will come from many sources including, for example, climate change causing sea level rise affecting the Tidal River and the systems discharging into it, and catchment pressures from housing and infrastructure growth.

Following this initial data gathering phase, which we hope to complete in the next 18-24 months, we will produce a **joint project plan** for the next phase of work. The outcome of Phase 2 will be to produce a jointly owned strategic plan reviewing all options that could manage flood risk in the Fens, taking in to account climate change and sea level rise and recommending actions that will be the best/ most appropriate way of managing flood risk in the Fens over the next 50-100 years.

The TG will work closely with the Environment Agency's Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire Partnerships and Strategic Overview Team who are progressing a similar project for the Lincolnshire Fens, but at different timescales.

The TG understands that there are **many different areas of interest** within the Fens, and a lot of groups and individuals will be interested in the work of the project.

At this stage in the project, there is a very **strong focus on the flood risk management challenges** – specifically focusing on current flood risk management assets. We will keep interested stakeholders updated with the progress of this stage of the project and **our work will be overseen by the Anglian Central Regional Flood and Coastal Committee**.

The TG is aware of the importance of linking Phase 1 outputs to other projects shaping the future of the Fens landscape.



Ely Group of Internal Drainage Boards



middle level commissioners



Mr Lakey reported that during an inspection with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and District Officer at the pumping station it was noted that the access path around the pump control building and steps down to the weedscreen were deteriorating. He confirmed that a quotation for works on the steps, reinforced concrete on top of the weedscreen deck together with a handrail at the steps had been obtained in the sum of £6,575. He also advised that if this work was not completed it was an area that could give rise to health and safety issues.

Miss Ablett advised the Commissioners of the £47,000 held in their development fund which could be used to pay for these repairs.

The Vice-chairman considered the quotation was reasonable and in view of the health and safety implications proposed that the works be carried out.

Mr Lakey reported that, having been informed by Mr Steward that he no longer wished to carry out any flail mowing works, he had approached R Dale and N Harrison who were both interested in the work. He advised the Commissioners of the rates quoted by both contractors and enquired who they wished to appoint.

After further discussion, the Commissioners agreed to ask R Dale to carry out the works for the coming year and for this to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Miss Ablett referred to planning applications (MLC Ref. Nos. 65, 78, 79, 108, 139, 142 & 150 143) for which no further information had been received since the Commissioners' last correspondence and enquired whether the Commissioners wished for the Planning Engineer to write again to the applicant and the applicants' agents for further information.

With regards to the erection of 11 business units and palisade fencing and gates at land north of Thorby Avenue, March, (MLC Ref No. 155), Miss Ablett reported that neither the applicant, its agent nor engineering consultants had contacted the Commissioners to discuss the matter further and an application for discharge consent had also not been received. She enquired whether the Commissioners wished to write to all parties concerned in order to resolve the issue.

Mr Downes joined the meeting.

The Chairman requested Mr Downes report on the weedscreen.

Mr Downes reported that the weed screen was corroded and advised that welding a bar across the top of it would be sufficient for it to last another 5-10 years.

The Chairman enquired whether the Commissioners needed to consider replacing the weedscreen and Mr Downes confirmed that this would not be necessary once it had been repaired.

Mr Downes left the meeting.

Councillor Cornwell advised that the Councils Local Plan was currently being reviewed and updated and considered the Commissioners should contact Fenland District Council with a view to having a land drainage policy regarding planning applications included within the plan for consideration.

The Vice Chairman considered this was a matter the Middle Level Commissioners should undertake on behalf of all Boards as they were all experiencing the same problems relating to planning applications.

The Chairman confirmed he would raise this point at the next Chair's meeting.

RESOLVED

i) That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.

ii) Weed Control and Drain Maintenance

That the recommendations contained in the Report be approved.

iii) That the works relating to the concrete works, path, steps and handrail at the pumping station be approved and paid for from the development fund.

iv) That the corroded weedscreen be repaired and paid for from the development fund.

v) Planning Applications MLC Ref. Nos. 78, 79, 108, 139, 142 & 143

That the Planning Engineer write to all parties who have not responded to the Commissioners initial correspondence .

vi) That a letter be sent to all parties relating to planning application (MLC Ref. No. 155).

vii) That the Planning Engineer contact Fenland District Council's Planning Department to enquire whether a policy statement on land drainage could be added to the Local Plan.

C.947 Capital Improvement Programme

The Commissioners considered their future capital improvement programme.

Councillor Cornwell enquired whether the weedscreen would last a further 10 years and whether the Pump Attendant was happy to continue with the manual raking arrangements.

The Pump Attendant advised he was satisfied with the current arrangements and the proposed improvements works.

The Vice Chairman referred to the Consulting Engineer's comments and considered that based on his view and the weedscreen being repaired in the current year the Commissioners should perhaps consider the installation of automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment in 10 years time.

Discussion followed and it was agreed to include the £7,000 for the pumping station and weed screen repairs in 2019/2020, that the £80,000 for an automatic weedscreen cleaner should not be considered until 2028/2029 at the earliest and that £7,000 be included in 2024/2025 in case the weedscreen needed replacing in the meantime.

Miss Ablett advised that the capital programme is reviewed each year and the Commissioners need to start considering the funding of automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment in the near future.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the amendments listed, the Capital Programme be approved and kept under review:-

£7,000 be included in 2019/2020 for repairs to the pumping station surrounds and weedscreen repairs.

£7,000 be included in 2024/2025 for a replacement weedscreen.

£80,000 be included for automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment in 2028/2029.

C.948 Conservation Officer's Newsletter and BAP Report

Miss Ablett referred to the Conservation Officer's Newsletter, dated December 2018, previously circulated to the Commissioners.

The Commissioners considered and approved the most recent BAP report.

C.949 Pumping Station duties

- a) The Commissioners gave consideration to the payments in respect of pumping station duties for 2019/2020.
- b) The Commissioners gave consideration to the fuel allowance payable to Mr Alterton.

RESOLVED

- i) That T Alterton Esq continue as Pump Attendant to the Commissioners during the ensuing year.
- ii) That the Commissioners agree that the sum of £633.00 be allowed for the provision of pumping station duties for 2019/2020.
- iii) That the Commissioners agree that a £52.00 fuel allowance be allowed to Mr Alterton.
- iv) That, in future years, an increase in accordance with the Middle Level Commissioners' pay award be made to the Pump Attendant.

(NB) – Mr Alterton declared a financial interest when this item was discussed.

C.950 State-aided Schemes

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

Update on the EA grant-in-aid position

Miss Ablett reported that the EA undertook a 'refresh' of its grant allocation schedule and optimised it to increase the likelihood of meeting the government outcome measure targets. As part of this some schemes were deferred in favour of those which could be delivered within the next two years with certainty and the programme has, as a consequence, become financially oversubscribed. This effectively means that there will be little or no chance of receiving grant for any new schemes between now and 2021 (at the earliest). This date marks the end of the six-year funding commitment and whilst it is understood that the EA are pressing hard to have another six-year settlement and, if agreed to by treasury, for this to be larger than the previous one to help address the increasing investment required to tackle climate change driven impacts. At this point in time we do not know what will happen and changes could be made in any event to the funding

model, what outcome targets are or the process of securing grant. What is clear is that the further ahead that IDBs collectively plan their investment needs the more likely whatever grant is available will be accessible by them.

Miss Ablett reported an asset survey of the pumping station had not been carried out for 10 years and enquired whether the Commissioners wished for this to be revisited as it may assist with planning for future investment needs. She advised that the cost of a survey would be in the region of £250. Miss Ablett further reported it had been approximately 5 years since the pumping station had been valued by the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer for insurance purposes and enquired whether the Commissioners wished for this to be re-visited also.

The Vice Chairman considered that, based on both the Consulting Engineer's report and the repair works scheduled for the current year, there was no need for either the survey or the valuation to be re-visited and that the repairs should be completed before a decision could be made.

The Chairman agreed and proposed that both the asset survey and the pumping station valuation be deferred until the planned works had been completed and any points that may be raised by the health and safety consultants had been addressed. He confirmed that both items should be considered next year.

RESOLVED

- i) That no proposals be formulated at the present time.
- ii) That both the asset survey and the pumping station valuation be deferred and consideration be given at the next meeting.

C.951 Environment Agency – Precept

Miss Ablett reported that the Environment Agency had issued the precept for 2019/2020 in the sum of £1,102.88 (the precept for 2018/2019 being £1,050).

C.952 Claims for Highland Water Contributions – Section 57 Land Drainage Act 1991

(a) Miss Ablett reported that the sum of £1,124.87 (inclusive of supervision) had been received from the Environment Agency (£1,311.26 representing 80% of the Commissioners' estimated expenditure for the financial year 2018/2019 less £186.39 overpaid in respect of the financial year 2017/2018).

(b) Further to minute C.907(b), Miss Ablett referred to the discussions with the Environment Agency over the monies available to fund highland water claims.

RESOLVED

That the position be noted and the situation kept under review.

C.953 Association of Drainage Authorities

a) Subscriptions

Miss Ablett reported that it was proposed by ADA to increase subscriptions by approximately 2% in 2019, viz:- from £542 to £553.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription be paid for 2019.

b) Future ADA Communications

Miss Ablett referred to a letter received from ADA dated 18th October 2018 and to the form included with the agenda.

In order to continue to receive communications from ADA in 2019, ADA required a completed form from each Member. The form could also be completed and returned electronically via the link at www.ada.org.uk/communications.

C.954 Health and Safety

The Chairman reported that, following various Chairs meetings, it had been agreed to enter into a 3 year contract with Cope Safety Management. He advised that the annual cost to the Commissioners would be £200 per annum which would include 2 inspections the first year and one the following two years but should extra support be needed Cope could provide this at a day rate of £500 per day or £85 per hour.

The Chairman reported that having received a letter from the Clerk enquiring whether the Commissioners wished to be included in the joint arrangement he had discussed this with the Vice-Chairman. He advised that both he and the Vice-Chairman raised their concerns with the Clerk and enquired whether Cope would shoulder the responsibility should there be any issues, as the Commissioners did not want to be held responsible.

The Chairman reported that Cope had responded and advised that, essentially, if they provided advise or assistance or failed to provide such assistance when asked, which caused the Commissioners to perform a wrongful act, then Cope could be prosecuted for that offence. The Chairman further reported that Cope had also confirmed that this would extend to other persons in a similar capacity such as electrical or mechanical contractors carrying out work on behalf of the Commissioners.

Councillor Cornwell stated that although this gave some comfort the Commissioners could not remove all risk and could be open to prosecution. The Vice-Chairman agreed but highlighted that using a health and safety consultant would reduce the risk to them quite significantly.

Miss Ablett confirmed that although using Cope would reduce the risk of any non-compliance, ultimately the Commissioners would still be responsible.

The Chairman advised that based on the response received from Cope both he and the Vice-Chairman thought it was in the interest of the Commissioners to join the arrangement with Cope Safety Management.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman's actions be approved

C.955 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Commissioners – 2017/2018

- a) The Commissioners considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2018.
- b) The Commissioners considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2018.

C.956 Defra IDB1 Returns

Miss Ablett referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2017/2018.

C.957 Budgeting

Miss Ablett referred to the budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2019.

C.958 Review of Internal Controls

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

C.959 Risk Management Assessment

- a) The Commissioners considered and expressed satisfaction with their current Risk Management Policy.
- b) The Commissioners reviewed and approved the insured value of their buildings and considered having a revaluation of the Commissioners' real estate assets, as required for audit purposes.

RESOLVED

That no changes be made to the valuation at this time and for the matter to be reviewed again at the next annual meeting.

C.960 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Miss Ablett reported that, as resolved at its last meeting, the Commissioners will continue with a limited assurance review and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

RESOLVED

To continue with a limited assurance review as has been carried out in previous years.

C.961 Exercise of Public Rights

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

C.962 Annual Governance Statement – 2018/2019

The Commissioners considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended on the 31st March 2019.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement, on behalf of the Commissioners, for the financial year ending 31st March 2019.

C.963 Payments

The Commissioners considered and approved payments amounting to £17,580.02 which had been made during the financial year 2018/2019.

(NB) – Mr Alterton declared an interest in the payment made to him.

C.964 Annual Accounts of the Commissioners – 2018/2019

The Commissioners considered and approved the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2019 as required in the Audit Regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Return, on behalf of the Commissioners, for the financial year ending 31st March 2019.

C.965 Expenditure estimates and special levy and drainage rate requirements 2019/2020

The Commissioners considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2019/2020 and were informed by Miss Ablett that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 58.01% and 41.99%.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.

- ii) That a total sum of £9,714 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
- iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £5,635 and £4,079 respectively.
- iv) That a rate of 15.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.
- v) That a Special levy of £4,079 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- vi) That the seal of the Commissioners be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levy referred to in resolution (v).
- vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

C.966 Display of rate notice

RESOLVED

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

C.967 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That the next Meeting of the Commissioners be held on Tuesday the 16th June 2020.