WARBOYS SOMERSHAM AND PIDLEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Warboys Somersham and Pidley Internal Drainage Board held at the Lakeside Lodge, Pidley on Thursday 1st December 2022

PRESENT

C Leadbetter Esq (Chairman)	S Johnson Esq
J C Armstrong Esq	D D Brown Esq
D W Cornwell Esq	Cllr A Costello
S Edgley Esq	D J Edwards
J German Esq	Cllr C Lowe
I Johnson Esq	T E A Noble Esq
R Waters Esq	D W England Esq
M England Esq	J M Short Esq
H W Whittome Esq	S W Whittome Esq

Mr David Thomas (Clerk to the Board), Mr R Wilmer (District Officer) and Mr Richard Wilmer (Dep DO) was in attendance.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from, Lord De Ramsey, D R A Fabb Esq, L C A Munns.

B.1832 Declarations of Interest

Mr Thomas reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

B.1833 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 2nd December 2021 are confirmed and signed, with one amendment:

It was reported that the Board had confirmed its objection in principle to a new treated effluent sewer pipe being installed at Puddock Pumping Station.

B.1834 Matters arising from the Minutes

None

B.1835 Resignation of G Munns Esq

Mr Thomas advised that Mr G Munns had tendered his resignation from the Board on 26th May 2022, and that a letter of Thanks had been sent.

B.1836 Vacancy in Membership

The Board considered the vacancy on the Board left by Mr Munns resignation. Members felt that as they would be discussing reducing the overall membership of the Board, it would be inappropriate to seek to fill the vacancy at this time.

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by Lord De Ramsey, who had advised that it was his intention to step down as a Board member next year.

RESOLVED

That the vacancy not to be filled at this time.

B.1837 Election of Board Members

The Board noted that the election had been concluded successfully.

B.1838 Appointments 2022/2023

a) The clerk advised that the previous Chairman, C Leadbetter Esq had indicated his willingness to stand again. No other members put forward alternative proposals and Mr Leadbetter was again elected to the position of Chairman.

b) The Clerk advised that the previous Vice Chairman D Brown Esq had indicated his willingness to stand again. No other members put forward alternative proposals and That Mr Brown was again elected to the position of Vice Chairman.

c) The Board confirmed they wished to continue to employ Middle Level Commissioners to provide Clerking and Administrative Services.

d) The Finance Committee were voted back in with no changes proposed on-block.

The Chairman states that he considered communications between the office and the Board Chairman & Vice Chairman needed to be improved and suggested regular emails to both on matters affecting the Board.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman appointed be C Leadbetter Esq.

That the Vice Chairman appointed be D Brown Esq.

That the Middle Level Commissioners be retained as Clerk to the Boards.

That the Finance Committee continue to comprise of D Brown Esq, Lord De Ramsey, D England Esq, M England Esq, D Fabb Esq, J German Esq, C Leadbetter Esq, T Noble Esq & H Whittome Esq.

B.1839 Rental Agreement, Puddock Pumping Station Bungalow

Further to minute B.1802, the Board discussed the current rental arrangements for Puddock Pumping Station bungalow. It was noted that the current 6-month lease had expired but could continue as long as the Board and current occupier wished it to. The current replacement District Officer, Richard Wilmer advised that he did not wish to occupy the property at this time.

RESOLVED

The Board agreed to allow the current occupant to remain as tenant at this time with no immediate plan for review of this arrangement.

B.1840 Fenton Lode New Cut – (Tesco Site)

The Clerk reported that at the site inspection, which preceded the meeting, members had expressed significant concern that Persimmon Homes had carried out work within the Board's byelaw strip without first obtaining consent. The matter was discussed and the view of the Chairman (which was supported by the members) was that a hard line should be taken when protecting the Board's interests.
There was also a general view that Middle Level staff should have been more pro-active in dealing with the breach. The Clerk pointed out that the Board had no control over land use, cannot unreasonably withhold its consent and had in the past taken a softer line. He did, however, advise that the Board could and should endeavour to protect the interests of its ratepayers and part of this was ensuring all watercourses under the control of the Board can be maintained to a serviceable standard without incurring unnecessary difficulty or cost.
The Board discussed the pipeline and outfall constructed within the byelaw strip and were of the general view that the outfall may be recommended for consent but that the manholes in the strip would cause problems if it was likely they would be damaged when tracked over by excavators.
The Clerk noted that if this matter ended up legally contested, then the legal costs would be expected to be incurred. The Board considered that it was necessary to draw a clear line and the risk of incurring charges should not be seen as a reason not to stand firm.

RESOLVED

That as a matter of urgency, the Clerk write to Persimmon Homes giving notice that they are to remove works carried out within the area of Byelaw control.

That the Chairman & Vice Chairman be empowered to take decisions in relation to the byelaw breach including the appointment of legal experts.

B.1841 Outstanding Drainage Rates

Further to minute B.11803, The Clerk reported significant work had been done to bring the Boards Rating area plans up to date. It was hoped to get this finalised soon and to take any actions needed to identify any land that remained unallocated to a ratepayer and then to seek to identify occupation.

RESOLVED

That the current position be noted.

B.1842 Review of Easement Agreements (A Barlett & Sons Ltd)

Further to minute B.1807, The Clerk reported that the Chairman had met with the landowners who had confirmed that there would be no additional control measures in place restricting the historically agreed access arrangements for the Board's machinery through the site.

B.1843 Clerk's Report

The Clerk advised: -

i) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

That an eighth Chair's Meeting was held on the 12th April 2022.

The meeting covered a wide variety of matters likely to affect IDBs. A summary of the key points and resolutions follows;
It was recorded that there had been a number of MLC staff changes over the period. These included the retirement of Deb Watts, Katie Hunt and Malcolm Downes. Also, Sarah Lemmon and Richard Lloyd had handed in their notice. New members of staff replacing them and linked with some restructuring of the finances and admin departments were Dave Bantoft (M&E Engineer), Sarah Bowd (Accounts Assistant), Polly Tombleson (PA Secretarial) and Claire Collings (Secretarial).

It was reported that following the successful telemetry grant bit for Local Levy £125K in grant had been secured and consequently an order had been placed for in excess of 45 new telemetry outstations. The MLC have tested the new system with the six stations they commissioned and were satisfied with its operation.

Training for Board members was covered and it was noted that ADA provide online training videos. Various methods for delivering these and recording attendance was discussed and it was finally resolved that the best way forward would be to ask all members to watch one or two videos a year and to record when they had been viewed. A record of who had watched which video would be retained and this information recorded at Board meetings and used to support DEFRA IDB1 returns.

A proposal to move from time charges to lump sum annual fees for planning and consenting matters was discussed and it was agreed that a proposal to move to this more efficient and effective way of working would be put to each Board. For similar reasons it was resolved that a proposal should be put forward which would reduce the scale of content reported to Boards under planning matters.

Inflationary pressures were touched upon and it was recognised that if this continues there will be pressure placed upon Boards to raise their rates more than has occurred in recent years. It was also recognised that along with these inflationary pressures there were increasing demands (with legal backing) evolving in relation to environmental gains and Boards should be aware of the costs of delivering on these. Examples are the government's commitment to protect 30% of all land by 2030 for the environment and of the Doubling Nature initiative in Cambridgeshire.

An update on work in relation to climate change and carbon reduction was given. Work currently in hand comprises of production of a carbon baseline for the MLC. Once complete the scale of the challenge to target carbon neutrality will be known and work will be undertaken to identify possible opportunities for reduction and mitigation, prior to production of a policy statement. During these next stages it is expected that Boards associated with the MLC will be similarly assessed and plan proposals made for them.

ii) <u>Association of Drainage Authorities</u>

a) <u>Annual Conference</u>

That the 85th Annual Conference of the Association was held on Wednesday 9th November 2022, The Hive, Nocton, Lincolnshire.

The Clerk to reported that the Annual ADA Conference had been held at the Dyson farming complex in Lincolnshire, and the representatives from DEFRA, the Netherlands Water Boards and an IDB Clerk had spoken. The IDB Clerk wished to promote the view that drainage rates should be disaggregated from general rates on Council Tax demands, just as the police and fire service are. This would raise the profile of IDBs and would remove the risk of a referendum being triggered by an IDB rate rise pushing the Council Tax increase over the threshold. The counter view expressed, was that this risk only affected a few councils and that the change could lead to a wider review of the work of IDBs when one is not required.

The Netherlands representative spoke on the similarities and differences between flood risk management in the two countries and the current aims and objectives of her Board. Finally, DEFRA representative spoke generally on matters which may affect IDBs and commended the Boards on the work they do.

The MLC Chief Executive also spoke at the event, and stated his opinion that IDBs had evolved into seasonal water provision and control managers, from simple flood risk managers and that the current legislation and steer from government neither acknowledged this nor supported it, hence change was required. The DEFRA representative agreed but felt that before considering primary legislative changes, it would be necessary to explore if any current legislation could be used to support the wider work of IDBs.

b) Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch

That the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association will take place on Tuesday 7th March 2023 at Prickwillow Village Hall, and will be preceded by a morning workshop. The theme of the workshop will be water resources and climate change and will cover the newly proposed Fenland reservoir.

iii) Smart Level System/District Wide Telemetry Bid

Further to minute B.1811(x), the Clerk noted the success of the telemetry installation, which the District Officer acknowledged and the Chairman asked that the login details be provided to him.

B.1844 Consulting Engineer's Report, including planning and consenting matters

The Board considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers.

RESOLVED

i) High Fen – not to replace the pump at High Fen at this time as a spare is available.

ii) To check and report at the next meeting on whether or not one of the pumps has already been refurbished at Puddock Pumping Station and if so, which one and when.

iii) Check to see if there is a smart charger at Washways as overcharging may be causing the life of batteries to be shortened. Contact the Chairman with findings.

iv) Email all members the background information to the reported lack of success on the residential development on land to the west of Richmond Lodge, Pidley.

The fence around Metalcraft's new training centre was discussed and it was agreed no further action would be required at this time.

B.1845 District Officers Report

The District Officer reported that the majority of the works planned had been undertaken and gone well. Also, that they had been delivered at a lower cost than last year. He also noted that that there were a number of issues which required the Boards instruction, that were highlighted during the morning's inspection, as follows:

Washways Pumping Station

The inlet for taking water into the system is seized. This appears to be pipe which would allow water to be back-fed into the system and it would be worth surveying it and seeing if it could be made operable. At the moment, the handle for it is placed below deck level, so it could not be operated safely. However, it should be possible to extend the spindle to make it usable.

Puddock Pumping Station

The inlet leaks and contributed to the system being overfull during the summer months when most IDB sub-catchments were without water. It will, therefore, be necessary to dam off and inspect the inlet penstock, prior to repairing or replacing it.

RESOLVED

> That the Middle Level Commissioners be asked to investigate further the possibility of fixing the Washways inlet pipe, so it can be used to bring water into the system.
> That the Middle Level Commissioners price for repair or replacement of the inlet penstock at Puddock Pumping Station.

A discussion took place over the costs borne by the Board in feeding water around the District for irrigation purposes. This includes pumping which will be considerably more expensive this year. After a lengthy discussion, the Board expressed its view that it should, for the time being, continue with the current arrangement. It was noted, that whilst primarily water was moved around in summer to support the growing of crops, there was also a benefit to the environment which helped deliver on the environmental duty placed upon the Board.
The Chairman expressed his thanks on behalf of the Board to Bob & Richard for all their hard work for the preceding year.

B.1846 Association of Drainage Authorities – Subscriptions

The Clerk reported that ADA have increased subscriptions by 4.5% for 2023.

ADA subscriptions for 2022 were £875, will be £915 for 2023.

RESOLVED

> That the ADA subscription for 2023 be paid.

B.1847 Contribution from Developers

The Clerk reported that a contribution towards the cost of dealing with the increased flow or volume of surface water run-off and treated effluent volume has been received.

B.1848 Health & Safety

The Clerk advised that the next Cope Safety Management visit will be 18th January 2023. The report from this visit will be included in the next meeting's agenda.

The Board confirmed that they were happy with the work of Cope Safety Management, which had delivered positive outcomes in a practical way.

<u>B.1849 Financial Statement</u>

The Clerk reported:

a) Board's revenue cash balance at 16th November 2022:-

Clients Premium Account	£862,772.17

b) Drainage rates and special levies outstanding at 2nd November 2022 £80,241.40

<u>B.1850 Risk Management Assessment</u>

Further to minute B.1824(b), the Board considered the valuation of their buildings and whether to index-link these values from April 2023.

The Board noted that construction labour and material costs were running ahead of inflation and considered that the building should be adequately insured.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

That the properties owned by the Board should be revalued this year and then the Board will start applying annual index-linked building inflation following on from this.

<u>B.1851 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2021/2022</u>

a) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2022.

b) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2022.

<u>B.1852 Defra IDB1 Returns</u>

The Board noted and approved the completed IDB1 form for 2021/2022.

B.1853 Expenditure/Estimate Update

The Clerk advised the Board how estimated expenditure for 2022/2023 compares with actual expenditure to date.

B.1854 Electricity

The Chairman reported on current costs, cost of pumping to retain levels throughout the District and possible renewable energy provision.

It was noted that the electricity bill can vary dramatically and that any opportunities should be taken to fine tune the system to save energy and reduce costs. It was also pointed out that there is inbuilt apparatus, such as panel heaters, which may be left on all year round, consequently Boards can be using between 40 – 300KWh per month per Pumping Station without running pumps.

RESOLVED

> That the Mechanical and Electrical Engineer check each station, to see if electricity use can be lowered whilst the stations are dormant. This to be done as part of the station services. In addition, the possibility of including a setting which precludes day running during periods of low flood risk to be investigated.
> The Chairman to have the delegated power to instruct any changes which are likely to save the Board money long term in this respect.

B.1855 Date of next Meeting

Date of next meeting 10th May 2023

B.1856 Any Other Business

Members noted that the current District Officer retires this year and wished to record their thanks for his hard work and dedications over his many years of service.

Richard, his son, will take over from him.