MANEA AND WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

At a Meeting of the Manea and Welney District Drainage Commissioners held at The Lamb and Flag Public House, Welney on Wednesday 8th February 2023

PRESENT

J E Heading Esq (Chairman)
N Cook Esq
Cllr C J Crofts Esq
M D R Fairey Esq
R Gladwin Esq
M E Heading Esq
Mrs A J Morris
C W Sears Esq
W Sutton Esq
N V M Walker Esq

Mr Robert Hill (representing the Clerk to the Commissioners) and Mr Paul Burrows (Middle Level Commissioners) were in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from J H Hawes Esq, R M C Sears Esq (Vice Chairman) and P D Hawes Esq.

The Chairman introduced Mr Roger Gladwin, who, being qualified as a Commissioner, had contacted him with a view to taking on an active role in the running of the District. On behalf of the members, the Chairman welcomed Mr Gladwin to his first meeting of the Commissioners.

The Chairman introduced Mr Paul Burrows, who had recently been appointed by the Middle Level Commissioners as Clerk & Chief Executive to take over from Mr David Thomas, who would be retiring towards the end of March 2023. He informed members that when Mr Burrows formally took up the position be would become Clerk to the Commissioners.

C.960 Declarations of Interest

Mr Hill reminded the Commissioners of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any of them.

The Chairman and Mr M Heading declared an interest in the planning applications (MLC Ref Nos 573, 579 & 594) received for A & E G Heading Ltd.

The Chairman, M Heading and Councillors Croft and Sutton declared interests (as Members of the Middle Level Board) in the payments made to and any matters concerning the Middle Level Commissioners.

The Chairman declared an interest (as a Director) in the payments made to and any matters concerning the Association of Drainage Authorities.

Councillors Croft & Sutton and Mr Gladwin declared interests (as Members of Upwell IDB) in the payments made to and any matters concerning the Upwell IDB.

Councillor Sutton declared an interest in any planning matters as a member of Fenland District Council.

C.961 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Commissioners held on the 2nd February 2022 and 22nd June 2022 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

C.962 Appointments – 2023/2024

a) Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED

That J E Heading Esq be appointed Chairman of the Commissioners.

b) Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED

That R M C Sears Esq be appointed Vice Chairman of the Commissioners.

c) Appointment of Finance Committee

RESOLVED

That the Finance Committee be constituted as follows;

Cllr C J Crofts Esq, J E Heading Esq, P Jolley Esq, Mrs A J Morris, R M C Sears Esq and Cllr W Sutton Esq

C.963 Bank Mandate and National Savings & Investments

Mr Hill reported that it is necessary to update the signatories after April 2023 with Mr Paul Burrows replacing Mr David Thomas.

RESOLVED

That the Bank Signatories be updated after April 2023.

C.964 Land Drainage Act 1991

Mr Hill reported that Fenland District Council had re-appointed Councillors C Marks and W Sutton to be Commissioners under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

C.965 Joint Maintenance of the Old Croft River – Upwell IDB Overhanging Trees – Copes Hill Farm

Further to minute C.929, Mr Hill referred to the works carried out last year and that the Upwell IDB had carried out further tree clearance and slubbing works this year for which the final costs have not yet been finalised but were estimated to give a charge to the Commissioners, under the present arrangements, of around £4,000. He reminded members that they had previously agreed that these joint maintenance costs would be funded from balances.

The Chairman reported that there has been a long-standing arrangement to split costs for the maintenance of the Old Croft River 50/50 with Upwell IDB and that he had considered it important to draw up a formal agreement, setting out both parties responsibilities concerning maintenance and with regards to the apportionment of development contributions for those discharging directly to the watercourse.

Mr Hill reported that an initial draft had been raised which had been sent to both Chairmen, who had considered it to require further refinement.

Mr Walker enquired if sufficient notice of works was always given and it could be beneficial to include a clause in the agreement concerning notification of works.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to discuss these matters further with the Chairman of Upwell IDB and the Clerk with a view to drawing up a formal agreement between Manea and Welney DDC and Upwell IDB for the Joint Maintenance of the Old Croft River and to clearly define how development contributions discharging into the Old Croft River would be apportioned.

C.966 Ouse Washes Section 10 Reservoir Middle Level and South Level Barrier Bank Works

Further to minute C.930, Mr Hill referred to Newsletters from the Environment Agency dated December 2022 & January 2023, viz;

Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank raising works

December 2022

Project completion

The Middle Level Barrier Bank (MLBB) is the bank of the Ouse Washes reservoir extending from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice. The work we have carried out is to comply with recommendations made by the Reservoir Inspecting Engineer to complete the works under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Great news!

We are delighted to tell you that the Ouse Washes bank raising works finished in October 2022. We started construction in 2017 and the work has taken 6 years to complete.

We have raised the crest level of the MLBB between Welmore Lake Sluice and Earith and as part of the bank raising, we have provided a robust demountable flood barrier on the Welney Wash Road (A1101) where it crosses the Middle Level Barrier Bank and creates a low spot. We have also raised a low section of the South Level Barrier Bank between Sutton Gault and Chain Corner.

During October we completed the earthworks, the haul road raising, and we carried out the trialling and testing of the Welney demountable flood barrier. On the 14 October 2022 together with our contractor Jackson Civil Engineering and our supply chain partner Flood Control International Ltd, we held a training day for the Environment Agency field staff in how to install the barrier across the road in the event of flooding. The demountable flood barrier forms part of the 30km length of the Ouse Washes.

Due to the environmental constraints of the Ouse Washes work can only be carried out during the summer months, between 15 July and 31 October each year. This is to avoid disturbing the over wintering and ground nesting birds. Each year we have worked with Natural England to negotiate a longer working window to carry out winter repairs and haul road work.

We will continue to carry out regular inspections of the bank and monitor the grass growth for the next 2 years until the reservoir engineer gives a final sign-off in autumn 2024. This will include regular grass cuts, ecological surveys and repairs to damage that may happen over the winter months.

The footpath of the Middle Level Barrier Bank re-opened to the public on 1 November 2022. Although the bank is now open, the grass still needs to grow. We would appreciate if you would be careful when accessing and walking on the bank and stay away from the patches of grass that haven't grown fully yet.

What we have done	
Raised 30km of Middle Level Barrier Bank from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice	Raised 2.5km of South Level Barrier Bank from Sutton Gault to Chain Corner
Decommissioned Black Sluice	Decommissioned disused telemetry hut at Earith
Tree and shrub planting at Earith	Improved bridleway access in Earith
Flood wall extension at Sutton Gault	Haul road widening between Welches Dam & Mepal
Raised 7.1km of the haul road from Earith to Welney	Works to Increase bridge capacity at Welches Dam
Replaced the existing flood wall at Welches Dam	Installed 5 new bird hides at the RSPB reserve
Installed temporary bridges direct to the bank at Earith & Mepal to reduce traffic on local roads	Installed erosion protection along sections of the bank between Mepal & Welches Dam
Installed hardstanding at Mepal for temporary high-volume pumps	Constructed demountable flood barrier at Welney
Throughout the project we have engaged with the public, schools and organisations adding value in local communities; visits, activities, local noticeboards, public drop-in's, surgeries, newsletters, briefings, questionnaires, press releases, online information page, virtual exhibition rooms, online consultations & meetings, social media.	

Completion event

Representatives from local organisations, Ouse Washes user groups, Internal Drainage Boards, Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk County Councils joined us at the Wildfowl Wetland Trust in Welney on Friday 18 November to celebrate the end of the works. The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP for Northeast Cambridgeshire represented local constituents.

The Environment Agency and the project team, we would like to thank you for all the co-operation and support you have given us over the last 6 years.

How to stay in contact with us

Our Public Liaison Officers will continue to keep you updated during the maintenance period of the project. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Public Liaison Officers: Monica Stonham or Yazmin Parry via email ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com

Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir

Update

January 2023

Middle Level Barrier Bank

During the autumn reservoir inspection, our engineers identified cracks in the embankment between Welney and the A142 Mepal, following the prolonged period of hot, dry weather.

The reservoir bank remains in operation as normal although we do need to carry out repairs as soon as possible.

We will be installing equipment in the areas of the cracking over the coming days to monitor them. Operatives will also be carrying out weekly surveys during the winter months.

Our contractor, Jackson Civil Engineering, has started work between Welney and railway bridge. As you know this work will be dependent on weather and flood conditions.

There will be an occasional lorry delivery of materials to the access at Welney using the haul road where an excavator will load the materials onto a tracked dumper or similar for transport along the haul road.

We have liaised with Natural England and RSPB before going ahead with this work.

Public footpath

The Middle Level Barrier Bank will remain open.

Please continue to be careful when accessing and walking on the bank and stay away from the patches of grass that haven't grown fully yet.

We will continue to monitor the bank and grass growth.

Keeping your community up to date

We would like to thank you for your co-operation and patience, and we will continue to work with you and the community to minimise disruption.

Please contact our Public Liaison Officers, Monica Stonham or Yazmin Parry at ousewashesprojectea@gmail.com or on 07534 457348 for more information.

C.967 Potential Amalgamation Discussions – Manea & Welney DDC, Sutton & Mepal IDB and Upwell IDB

Further to minute C.931, the Chairman reminded members of the background to the discussions with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sutton & Mepal and Upwell IDB's. He considered that the three Boards should eventually merge into one Board and that, prior to this happening, there could be opportunities for shared working practices.

He referred to the challenges that would need to be faced concerning strategic plans for the Old Bedford River and the current plans for the Environment Agency to retain Welches Dam Pumping Station for a further 10 years, at which point they would be reviewing its future function within the system, as it could require an expensive upgrade.

He referred to current studies looking at water storage in the Block Fen area and gave a brief update on his understanding of the process to convert exhausted mineral extraction pits to water storage assets. He reported that he, along with the Chairman of the two other Boards were part of a review group looking into the viability of these proposals.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman continue discussions with Sutton & Mepal and Upwell IDB's Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.

C.968 Old Diesel Building – Glenhouse Pumping Station

Further to minute C.932, the Chairman informed members that after a full discussion, it was the recommendation of the Finance Committee not to carry out any remedial works to the structure in 2023/2024 and to review the matter further at next years meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee not to carry out any remedial works to the structure in 2023/2024 and to review the matter further at next year's meeting.

C.969 Clerk's Report

Mr Hill advised;

i) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

That a nineth Chair's Meeting was held on the 13th December 2022.

The meeting covered a wide variety of matters likely to affect IDBs. A summary of the key points and resolutions follows;

David Thomas advised on the planned staffing changes being implemented due to his impending retirements. He stated that his post was being split back into Chief Executive/Clerk and Chief Engineer and that the appointments were:

Paul Burrows – to be the new CEO/Clerk - currently in post with the EA as a national Delivery Assurance Manager, and before that as Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for the East Anglia Area, then Flood Strategy Manager – Paul spearheaded Tactical Plans for the Fens which have secured the possibility of obtaining significant grant allocation on a Board by Board basis over a 15 year period, whilst at the same time defining a pathway to better understand the challenges faced and options worth considering for our lowland catchment as climate change and growth tests our current infrastructure arrangements.
Nicola Oldfield – to be the new Chief Engineer – currently in post with the EA as a Senior Project Manager. She most recently project managed the £30M Middle Level Barrier Bank scheme and had just taken over as project manager of the Cranbrook Counter Drain Strategy. She has, in the past, been employed by an IDB and has worked in close partnership with many IDBs including North Level IDB. Jonathan Brown stated how pleased the MLC Executive had been with these two candidates and how easy the choice had been given their knowledge of the area and experience to date.

An update was given on the role out of telemetry, which was receiving positive feedback from District Officers. A request was made for the login details to be provided to Chairmen as well as District Officers and it was confirmed that this would be arranged.

David Thomas confirmed that all but two Boards had stated their wish to move to the new planning and consenting charging and reporting arrangements and that the Assistant Treasurer was finalizing figures ready for the 2023 IDB/DDC meetings. A request was made for all correspondence which developers and their agents which is copied to Chairman should include the planning application references.

The protection and control of Bylaw strips was discussed at length and it was agreed that a policy document outlining the red-lines Boards should be applying to ensure that their ratepayers do not suffer as a result of development will be prepared for the Boards to consider. It was noted at the meeting that the refusal to issue any consent is subject to a reasonableness test, hence the document cannot preclude consenting everything within the 9m strip and the policy will be for guidance purposes only. It was felt that it should help developers, planning authorities and the Boards by providing some additional clarity. It was also felt that some case history examples to be circulated to members might help them understand the issues which have to be addressed.

Climate Change was discussed and it was noted that the MLC had completed its carbon audit and would now start work on carbon reduction and mitigation initiatives. It was also noted that the M&E engineer was looking at base levels of energy consumption at pumping stations, for example to see if panel heaters are left on permanently. He will be making recommendations to Boards if he identifies scope for reducing power without risking the apparatus.

WRE were mentioned and the Chief Executive stated that he was pleased that the draft water resource plan for the East included extensive reference to agriculture and its need for water to support the growing of food to feed the nation and also of the key role played by IDBs in transferring water to the point needed by abstractors. He also commented upon the newly proposed Cambridgeshire fens reservoir, north of Chatteris and advised that the MLC were responding on the need to get fill supply and draw-down arrangements right, but also that we need to seek to gain capital from the opportunities that the new reservoir will present in terms of bringing money into the area and potentially helping reduce flood risk and assist with water need balancing.

The Chief Executive advised that a decision had been made to move the MLC and IDB's electricity supply contracts from Anglian Farmers to the Green Energy Advice Bureau. This followed several years of extended poor service levels and lack of timely information coming from Anglian Farmers.
The future of IDBs and the value of potential amalgamations was once discussed and this gave rise to questions over small boards being able to secure a quorate for which this had been a particularly poor year. It was agreed that this item should remain on the agenda and that any Chairs who felt that the time was right for their Boards to look again and the advantages/disadvantages of amalgamation would contract the Clerk. It was also agreed that it may be useful to undertake an exercise around updating the original Geoff Beal report which had recommended that the number of Boards within the area administered by the MLC could reasonably be reduced to three or four.

The Clerk finally noted that the ADA Great Ouse branch AGM would be held on the 7th March at Prickwillow Hall and would be in the format of workshops in the morning and an AGM in the afternoon. The workshops theme this year would be; water resources, the new reservoir and climate change.

ii) Application(s) for byelaw consent

That the following application(s) for consent to undertake works in and around watercourses has/have been approved and granted since the last general meeting of the Board/Commissioners:-

Name of Applicant	Description of Discharge	Date of Consent
E H Morris (Stonea) Ltd	Pipe and fill 8 m length of private roadside watercourse to extend existing culvert at Rutland Farm, Wimblington Road, Manea	31/03/2022

iii) Association of Drainage Authorities

a) Annual Conference

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

This year marked another change in the arrangements for the National Conference and AGM, with the AGM being held virtually on 28th September 2022 followed by the national conference held as a hybrid meeting at the Dyson Farming complex in Lincolnshire on 9th November. The choice of venue was to avoid the risk of being impacted by rail strikes and it also represented significant cost savings. The event had limited numbers and was fully subscribed.

Following an introduction by the President of ADA Robert Caudwell who noted the good work being done by ADA but also noted that with COP27 ahead climate change was the single biggest challenge facing everybody and that IDBs would need to play their part in delivering carbon reduction.

The opening address was given by Councillor Matthew Riddle, Chairperson, Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board and Councillor, South Gloucestershire Council who spoke on options which could be pursued to change the way Special Levy is reported and dealt with by the Councils. The challenge at the moment was perceived as the lack of transparency with Special Levy payments not being itemised on rate bills in the same way that police and ambulance services are. There is also the issue that by not disaggregating the Special Levy payments, increases in them can currently (for Councils who pay large Special Levys) trigger a local election under the current rules.

Key note speakers were Hazel Durant Waterway & Flood Water Management Policy Team, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Luzette Kroon Board member: Innovation & International, Dutch Water Authorities, Dykgraaf (chairperson), Wetterskip Fryslân. Hazel spoke of the challenges ahead and noted that it would be foolhardy to expect revenue expenditure to be increased by treasury given the current economic climate. The best we could hope for would be last years' figures to be matched. She praised the work of IDBs and noted the important role they play in delivering flood risk benefits through their direct works and also through PSCAs. Luzette spoke of the similarities and differences between IDBs and their Dutch equivalents and went on to describe the challenges faced arising from climate change.

A panel discussion followed and the MLC Chief Executive was invited to sit on this panel. He took the opportunity to outline the work of WRE but also to express his concerns that currently Land Drainage Act legislation was holding back the full potential of IDBs in terms of water resource management and investment. A review is urgently required and the support of the EA and DEFRA is needed. Hazel agreed that there was a need but hope a way forward could be found that didn't require primary legislation.

The day concluded with a field visit to showcase the Dunston Beck Improvement Project. The improvement project, completed by Dyson Farming with the Environment Agency, Wild Trout Trust and other partners, seeks to improve the biodiversity and water quality of the beck with a sensitive mosaic of wetland habitats delivered through excavations recreating a meandering river system with the retention of water providing ecological and also some modest flood risk benefits.

b) <u>Annual Conference 2023</u>

That the Annual Conference of the Association of Drainage Authorities for 2023 is yet to be announced.

c) <u>Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch</u>

That the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association was held on Tuesday the 1st March 2022.

This was the first face to face meeting held since the COVID-19 outbreak but the format was restricted to the AGM only. It is planned however to reintroduce the popular and useful morning workshops for 2023.

Marc Heading was reappointed as chair with Councillor Doug McMurdo as vice chair. Topics covered included unsurprisingly red diesel, and water resources/the work of WRE.

Sofi Lloyd announced that Brian Stewart and Ian Hodge from the EA had recently joined the ADA Board and that DEFRA had asked ADA to liaise with them on the implementation of schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act. She was also pleased to be able to report that ADA had been instrumental in initiating an all-party parliamentary group with a remit to discuss and consider Sustainable Flood and Drainage Management.

Phil Hulme and Amanda Macloughlan spoke on behalf of the EA covering the challenging associated with significant staff changes at the EA and noted that with the capital program for this six-year cycle being double that of the previous one this would be generating considerable additional work load.

It was advised that this coming years revenue (maintenance) budget was £5.3M which was more than the previous year but what could be delivered within this budget could be impacted by inflation.

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 7th March 2023.

iv) National Drainage Show & Floodex 2023

That the National Drainage Show & Floodex 2023 will be held at ExCel, London on the 22nd and 23rd November 2023.

v) Water Resources East (WRE)

Further to minute C.933 (vii), the Clerk reported that the requested contribution from this Board for 2023/2024 financial year is expected to once again be £125. Contributions from drainage boards within the East of England secure a direct stake in WRE and help to ensure their needs and opinions are taken into account.

Fees for 2022/23 of £125 were omitted from last meeting agenda, the Board are asked to approve this payment.

vi) Changes to Electricity Supply Contracts

The Clerk reported that Boards have encountered problems with the operation of the electricity contract by Anglia Farmers over the years. Following various meetings with them it appeared some of these problems were being addressed and the service appeared to be improving this, However, was short lived. Over the past 2 years there has again been a significant deterioration in both the quality of service and lack of account management received from Anglia Farmers.

During the summer the Middle Level Commissioners were approached by Green Energy Advice Bureau (GEAB), one of the UK's leading energy companies and buying group, whose portfolio includes numerous companies with over 200 million kwh tendered per annum. They have experience working with an estimated 60 Internal Drainage Boards, which include locally the Ely Group of Internal Drainage Boards and Downham Market Group of Internal Drainage Boards. We accordingly contacted Jean Heading of the Ely Group of Internal Drainage to enquire of the service provided by GEAB and she has confirmed she is far happier with the service received from them compared to that from Anglia Farmers and since has signed a 5-year fixed rate contract with GEAB from 1st April 2022.

A report was presented to the Middle Level Commissioners at their Board meeting on 3rd November 2022 and due to the ongoing poor performance of Anglia Farmers, together with the positive feedback given by Jean Heading of the Ely Group, the Commissioners' resolved to consider moving to alternative arrangements. The Executive Committee were delegated the final decision and having considered a report on the options and subsequently confirmed their agreement that a move would be appropriate in the circumstances.

The Clerk reported this was considered a positive move and recommended the Commissioners also move to this alternative arrangement.

The Clerk reported that the Chairman had subsequently agreed for the Commissioners to serve notice to Anglia Farmers and for Green Energy Advice Bureau to handle the energy procurement process and management of the electricity contract.

The Clerk advised that the Middle Level Commissioners and its administered Boards have entered into a fixed rate energy supply with Corona Energy for an 18-month period from 1st April 2023.

vii) Planning and Consenting Fees

Proposed changes to planning and consenting service supply charging

Two changes are proposed. The current arrangements and the proposed changes are outlined below.

1. The current arrangements for charging for Technical Services advice and support, for planning and consenting matters, is based upon a direct cost recovery arrangement. To achieve this all time spent on every item of work undertaken has to be logged and recorded in detail. This information is then pulled together and invoices prepared and checked before being passed to the Board Chairs for sign-off. This requires a considerable amount of time and effort and this time is of course included in the eventual fees paid. It is considered that a more efficient model would be to mirror the one used for charging for Clerking services which is based upon a lump sum annual fee. This has a number of advantages. It reduces internal workload which in turn releases time to carry out productive work. It also allows Boards to budget for the fees knowing at the time of rate setting what the annual fees will be.

   To ensure that a fair assessment is made it is suggested that the last five years of fees are looked at and an average taken. If there is clearly one or two years where one or two planning matters have impacted heavily upon the figures then an appropriate adjustment will be made. The final fee will be converted into a fraction of the costs of overall cost of supplying planning and consenting services for all Boards including the MLC and this percentage will become fixed until such time that a review is called for.
   In addition, we will still actively encourage developers and their agents to enter into Pre/Post application contracts. This will help keep the overall planning costs to a minimum. We will also be looking to move more and more to lump sum charges for developers for the same reasons outlined above, ie to reduce internal administration work and costs where possible.

   It is not proposed that this change will extend to other Technical Services work, such as surveys, catchment analysis, and refurbishment/replacement/improvement scheme work or associated advice which will continue to be logged and charged on a “hours spent” basis.

2. Many members have noted that the reporting in relation to planning application comments and responses is comprehensive. Again, it often takes many hours to produce such detailed

reports for which the Board is charged. This time could be spent in dealing with and taking action on planning and consenting matters. There is also the issue of the potential time lapse between any planning/byelaw issue raising its head and the meeting of the Board. It is of course normally advantageous to take action as soon as possible after any issue had become apparent. It is therefore proposed that going forward the Board nominate who they wish to be copied in on all planning correspondence, for example the Chair and Vice-Chair. They will then be able to liaise with the Planning Engineer if they wish to and will be conversant with discussions being undertaken. The Board may also wish to delegate decision making for initial actions for bylaw infringements to the Board nominee/s.

To ensure that the Board is consulted on the most important matters it is proposed that when it is wished for a matter to be raised within the Board report then a request from the Chair can be made and a detailed report would follow. This would normally be the case where significant costs might be associated with enforcement, including perhaps incurring legal fees or where an unusually large or significant development is proposed.

Should the above change be agreed to, then going forward the Engineer's report will provide a list of all planning applications of interest to the Board and consents applied for/approved but unless requested by the Chair no detail will be provided.

RESOLVED

WRE
That payments for 2022/23 & 2023/24 are approved.

Electricity Contracts
That the Chairmans actions are approved.

Planning & Consenting
That this item be referred to June 2023 meeting when more information will be available.

Cllr W Sutton left the meeting 12.18pm.

C.970 Consulting Engineers' Report, including Planning and Consenting Matters

The Commissioners considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers, viz;

Manea & Welney D.D.C.

Consulting Engineers Report – January 2023

Pumping Stations

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

Glenhouse

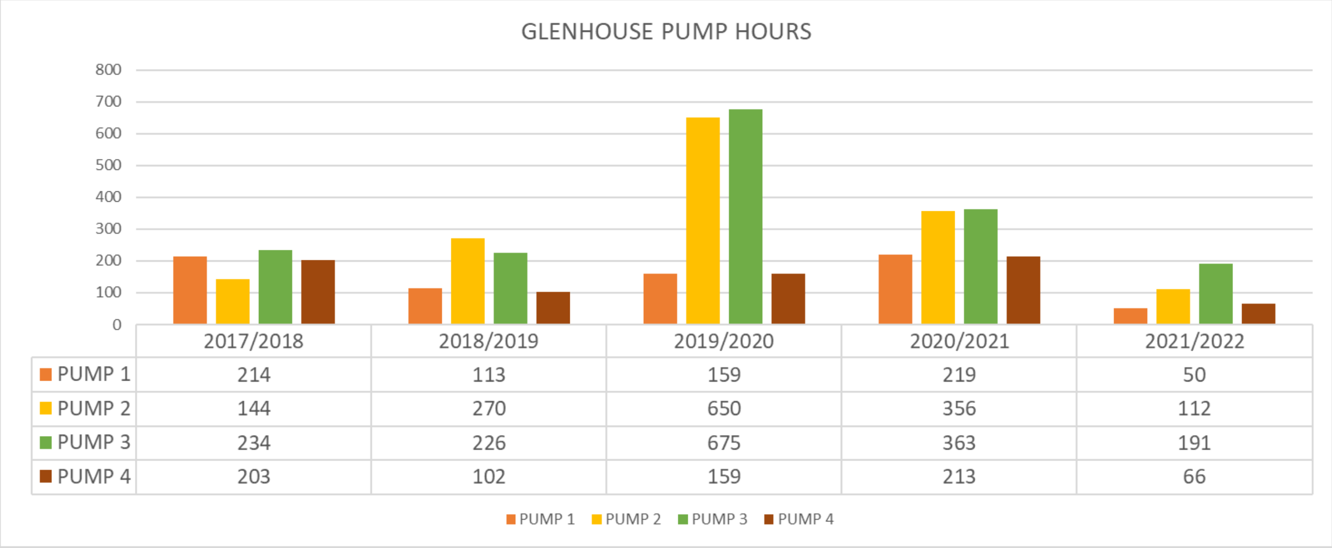
The weedscreen cleaner experienced intermittent faults on the grab unit hydraulics which were repaired during July 2022.

Bedford Pumps has been to site to assess options for electrification of pumps. It was advised that the current pumps could be modified to accept motors but could not be modified cost effectively to make them fish friendly and that it would therefore be more suitable to replace the pumps with fish friendly options. The fish friendly pumps would cost in the region of £120k each for submersible options and £200k for suspended bowl type pumps. It is the recommendation of the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer that although the canister type submersibles are cheaper to install, suspended bowl versions are a more cost-effective and reliable solution in the long term. Suspended bowl pumps use a more standard and simple range of motor, bearing and seal which makes repairs and overhaul simpler and increases the longevity of the pumps. Spares can be obtained many decades after original manufacture whereas most submersible manufacturers only guarantee part availability for 15 years after production of models has ceased. In addition to the pumps a new control panel will be required along with a suitable building to house it in, the supply will need upgrading considerably and provision should be made for backup generation in the event of power failure. The Civil Engineer is investigating how much grant may be available to the Board and how this could be split across the Board's stations.

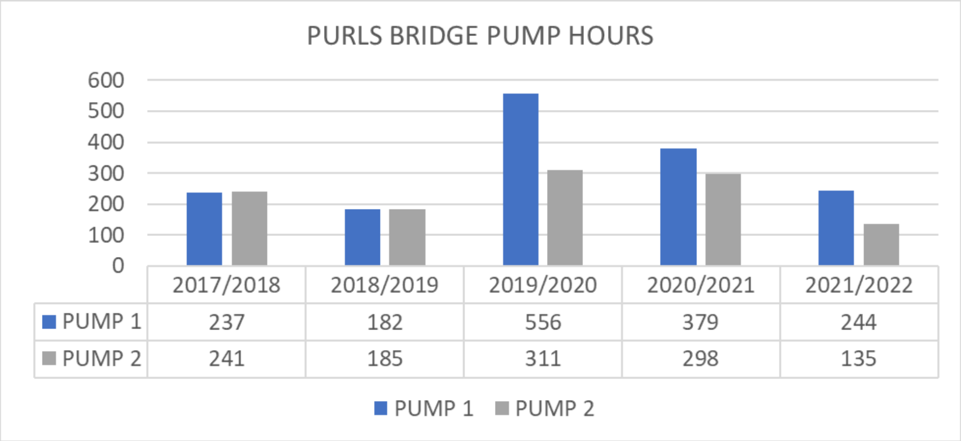
Purls Bridge

The insulation resistance of pump 1 has improved considerably and it will continue to be monitored. The weedscreen hoist ropes, nylon guides and buffers have been replaced as they were heavily worn.

Pumping Hours



	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
PUMP 1	214	113	159	219	50
PUMP 2	144	270	650	356	112
PUMP 3	234	226	675	363	191
PUMP 4	203	102	159	213	66



	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
PUMP 1	237	182	556	379	244
PUMP 2	241	185	311	298	135

Electricity Readings

Due to the volatility of the electricity market, taking regular and accurate manual electricity meter readings is becoming very important; even for sites with meters that are read remotely. This is so that bills can be verified to ensure correct rates are being applied.

Moving forward it is requested that the Pump Attendants/District Officers take electricity meter and pump run hours readings monthly (as close to the 1st of each month as they can) and then forward them onto the M&E Engineer on david.bantoft@middlelevel.gov.uk or 07768 026119.

Cranbrook/Counter Drain (CCD) Flood Risk Management (FRM) Strategy

Members are reminded that the Strategy seeks to utilise the restoration of gravel extraction sites for flood storage in Block Fen, reducing reliance on the Environment Agency's (EA) Welches Dam pumping station and potentially offering a number of wider benefits.

In the past 6 months, the EA has been progressing with hydraulic and topographical modelling tasks. These activities will help them understand how much floodwater is needed to be stored in a design event and how much could potentially be stored at Block Fen, based on mineral depths and existing restoration proposals. The next step is to develop a series of options as to how this flood storage could function, the associated enabling infrastructure and potential after uses alongside flood storage. This will include exploring opportunities for wider benefits such as water resources and biodiversity and working with the leading mineral operators to explore the development of flood storage proposals through 2023. Engagement with other key stakeholders is ongoing and discussions with several landowners in the catchment have commenced.

The announcement of Anglian Water's preferred location for the Fens Reservoir, immediately north west of the Block Fen allocated site, presents a number of opportunities and risks for flood storage at Block Fen. It also has a number of implications for long term flood risk management in the whole Cranbrook/Counter Drain catchment and at Welches Dam pumping station. The EA is meeting with partners in the new year to discuss these opportunities and risks and will be working with Anglian Water (AWS) to investigate these opportunities and risks.

The development of the overall catchment strategy is reliant on both the Fens 2100+ Strategy (EA led) and the Fens Reservoir (AWS led). These are being developed over a number of years and for this reason a focus is being made on the time limited opportunity of flood storage at Block Fen. This will allow the Fens 2100+ and the Fens Reservoir to progress over the next 2-3 years, such that it is possible to start planning for the whole catchment again over the long term (100 years). This is in line with the Tactical Plans approach which the Internal Drainage Boards are signed up to.

The focus of the next 6-12 months is on the storage opportunities in the allocated area (Block Fen/Langwood Fen) to develop the proposals further, understand achievable storage volumes and mechanisms for transferring water in/out of the storage areas. Liaison with local landowners and stakeholders will also continue, within the three Internal Drainage Board districts, to understand future water resource needs which could be delivered through the Strategy.

Ouse Washes Counter Drain Water Resources

Members will be aware that for many years the transfer of water from the Tidal Ouse into the Ouse Washes Counter Drain system to aid water resources during the irrigation season has been undertaken by the Commissioners' Lock Keeper at Salter's Lode. However, a change of circumstances has meant that this service is no longer possible. In the absence of any support from the EA this necessitated a change of procedure where the District Officers from the Boards benefitting from this resource, together with assistance from the Commissioners' staff, had to undertake this role themselves.

This change of procedure coincided with the challenging summer of 2022 which presented the worst possible combination with conditions being hot, dry and windy which required 81 transfers, significantly more than the 16 transfers that occurred the previous season.

In the absence of substantial rainfall, water quality issues had arisen by mid-June and there were a couple of periods when IDB abstraction was stopped.

A subsequent meeting with the EA was attended by representatives from the relevant parties and, in an effort to maximise the limited resource, discussions took place in regard to the operation of the EA's water control structures, channel maintenance, retained water levels, water salinity and recording levels.

In the absence of permanent replacement arrangements, it was commented that closer liaison is required between the parties involved, as the same level of service provided during the summer of 2022 may not be maintainable in the long term.

The Capacity of Manea-Town Lots Water Recycling Centre (WRC)

Item iv) of Minute C.934 Consulting Engineers' Report, including Planning and Consenting Matters

"iv) That the Chairman liaise with the Clerk to draft a letter to Anglian Water to express the Commissioners' concerns over the lack of investment in the sewage treatment works despite the increase in the population of the village which led to the flooding incident last year and would likely lead to further problems in the future."

Members will be aware that a planning application has been submitted and approved for the re-development of the former Lavender Mill to the east of the Westfield Road junction with Fallow Corner Drove, Manea, which is just within the neighbouring Curf and Wimblington IDB area.

It is understood that the site may have been sold and initial discussions with the potential purchaser and his engineering consultant have taken place.

During an internal consultation the Commissioners' Chairman advised that the Commissioners are "…concerned that the current AW water/sewage treatment plant is currently overwhelmed in storm conditions…" and are "…anxious about additional developments in the area of the Manea village."

See the entry on the Anglian Water Drainage & Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) towards the end of this Report.

Planning Applications

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

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
651	F/YR22/0544/F	Mr & Mrs Watts	Residence (Extension)	Station Road, Manea
652	F/YR22/0608/PNH	Mr M Pratt	Residence (Extension)	Willow Drive, Manea, March
653	F/YR22/0580/F	Mr J Brooks	Residence (Extension)	Charlemont Drive, Manea
654	F/YR22/0637/F	Mr M Martin	Residence (Extension)	East Street, Manea
655	F/YR22/0709/O	Sear's Brothers (1978) Retirement Benefit Scheme	Residential (Up to 5 plots)	Fodder Fen Road, Manea
656	F/YR22/0703/F	Mr & Mrs Geer	Equine (Manège)	Station Road, Manea*
657	22/01193/F	Mr C Underwood	Residence (Garage)	New Road, Welney
658	F/YR22/0819/F	Mr D Cole	Residence	Corner Drove, Manea
659	F/YR22/1057/F	Mr D Russ	Residence	Station Road, Manea
660	F/YR22/1074/F	Mr & Mrs Watts	Residence (Garage)	Station Road, Manea
661	F/YR22/1117/F	Mr D Gibson	Equine (Stable block comprising 3 stables, tack room and hay barn)	Station Road, Manea*

Planning applications ending 'PNH' relate to household permitted regulations notification

Developments that are known to propose direct discharge are indicated with an asterisk. The remainder propose, where applicable and where known, disposal to soakaways, infiltration devices and/or Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The applicants have been notified of the Board's requirements.

Some of the above are likely to discharge treated foul effluent water into the Commissioners' system either via private treatment plants or Manea Town Lots Water Recycling Centre (WRC).

Mr Wardle chose to use the Infiltration Device Self-Certification Service for surface water disposal from an extension at March Road, Welney (MLC Ref No 644) and, in doing so, agreed that if the device was to fail in the future, the land owner would be liable for any remedial works to rectify the situation.

The Engineer is currently investigating sites and, where appropriate, liaising further with developers and agents to ensure the requirements of the Commissioners are met.

The position concerning on-going issues is as detailed below:

Manea

Erection of an Anaerobic Digestion Plant, associated infrastructure, lagoon and feedstock clamps at land south west of Crane Farm (Colony Farm), Fifty Road, Manea – A & E G Heading Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 573, 579 & 594)

The appropriate documentation, in respect of the formation of the access culvert, has yet to be received.

Erect 1 x dwelling (3-storey 5/6-bed dwelling with integral garage) including 2.4m (max) high entrance gates and wall at land to the west of Biggins House, Fallow Corner Drove, Manea – Mr S Wright (MLC Ref No 611) and Ridge Oak Developments (MLC Ref No 646)

A Discharge Consent application was received from Ridge Oak Developments for the disposal of surface and treated foul effluent water using the existing pipe to the north of Fallow Corner Drove. The Commissioners were accepting of the proposal and the consent was recommended for approval in August.

Erect up to 4no dwellings on land to the west of 78-88 Station Road, Manea – Mr R Hirson (MLC Ref No 643)

This planning application, which is within Flood Zone 3, was refused by the District Council in November. Members will be aware that in the absence of passing both the Sequential and Exception Tests such development is contrary to National and Local policy and could therefore place people and property at an increased risk.

Welney

Residential development to the north west of The Grange and south east of New Road (Old Croft Place), Welney - Client of JPP Consulting (MLC Ref No 559) *& Mr R Boyd (Lincoln Jack Ltd/Loyd Homes/Client of SEA Structural Engineers Ltd)* (MLC Ref No 567)

Further to the last Board Meeting Report, the former dilapidated field access culvert has been replaced by the installation of a much larger and structurally sound box culvert to form the entrance into the site.

The works, which were undertaken during the summer, were partly co-ordinated with the road closure to install the "demountable" barrier across the A1101, that forms part of the larger Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank raising works, in order to minimise the adverse impacts on local residents and road users. This was not ideal particularly in view of the extreme weather experienced and some concerns were raised by Board Members and local residents about water level management which utilised temporary earth dams and over pumping.

The dams were removed upon installation of the box culvert and wing walls, thus restoring normal flow conditions. Some protective revetment will be required to alleviate the risk of any erosion to the channel profile.

View of the access culvert viewed from the downstream end

View of the access culvert viewed from the upstream end

Retention of holiday lodge (Plot 10A) and use of land for stationing 4 additional holiday lodges at Acorn Holiday Park, Bedford Bank, Welney - Chiltern Parks Ltd (MLC Ref No 633)

In the absence of a comment, it is presumed that the re-surfacing of the access track will not detrimentally affect the Commissioners' access and operations.

In a response to the Borough Council, the Environment Agency's Operations Manager Cambridgeshire (Lower Ouse Catchment) confirmed that:

"In the correspondence held in connection with both of the above referred applications, it is suggested that the Environment Agency is not going to take further action in respect of the surfacing of the track carried out by the applicants - this statement is not accurate.

The applicants do have the benefit of a right of access from the public highway to their property and they have a right to repair a section of the road, however they do not have a right in their deed to repair the entire length of the road. The Environment Agency is concerned that the works carried out by the applicants, without the Environment Agency's consent either as landowner or statutory body, were not appropriate.

A significant proportion of the surfacing work was carried out within 8m of a main river and no Environmental Permitting Regulations application was submitted (as is required in these circumstances). Our Enforcement team became aware of the works and subsequently served an Information Notice on the applicant of planning application ref 19/01961/FM requiring provision of information regarding the works. A warning letter was sent to the applicants on 15th March 2021 confirming that so far as the statutory functions of the Environment Agency were concerned, no further action would be taken for failure to comply with the Information Notice requiring the provision of information. It may be that the applicants were referring to this correspondence?

However, the issue regarding the appropriateness of the surfacing and the impact this has had on adjoining owners and the Environment Agency is still being considered by ourselves as the land owner. The Environment Agency is continuing to take legal advice and may yet pursue legal remedies.

The Environment Agency reserves its position both as landowner and as regulating authority, pursuant to its statutory functions and it is not therefore accurate to imply that the Environment Agency is satisfied with the works carried out given these works remain the subject of a dispute [and ongoing negotiation] between the applicants and the Environment Agency."

Planning Updates & Consultations

The "Strategic Planning Consultation Responses" document can be found on www.middlelevel.gov.uk via the following link Strategic Planning Consultation. Please note that this document was prepared for the previous reporting period; an update is currently being prepared and will be available on the website at some point after the meeting.

Anglian Water Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP)

Members will recall that from late 2019 the Commissioners have been involved in Anglian Water's DWMP process with updates provided in subsequent reports.

As part of the process the following information was submitted to assist the Baseline Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (BRAVA)/Risk Based Catchment Screening (RBCS) phases which was based on the evidence and events up to that time.

AWSL Ref	WRC Site	2019 Reported Population	Q1 Concern about the Facility Rating		Q2 Concern about the Managed Watercourse Rating		Notes
			Short Term 0-15 years	Long Term 15-25 years	Short Term 0-15 years	Long Term 15-25 years	Rating 0 Not concerned 1 Concerned 2 Very concerned
MANLSC	Manea Town Lots	1737	1	2	1	2	Small catchment that is increasing as growth occurs. Future growth will increase the catchment extents. Concerns about the adverse impacts on the receiving watercourse system, including the Ouse Washes, involving the current and future outfall/catchment extents, the capacity and maintenance of the receiving watercourse systems, flood risk implications, volumetric flow and water quality permit/consents

Table previously included in the January 2021 Meeting Report

Draft DWMP

A more detailed review of the draft DWMP will be included in the updated version of the Strategic Planning Consultation Responses document currently being prepared. However, in view of the discussions that are occurring, it is considered appropriate to include the entries for the relevant WRCs of interest to the local area.

The draft DWMP document has recently been the subject of a consultation. The response, made on behalf of the Commissioners and associated Internal Drainage Boards, included the following specific points:

Groundwater infiltration & surface water removal

The problems associated with groundwater infiltration and surface water within the sewer system, particularly within combined systems, are known and are a problem for all RMAs involved, particularly when the water table is high and/or during the winter months.

The removal of groundwater infiltration and surface water from the sewerage system, to reduce the number of flood events, pollutions and storm overflow spills is considered to be an appropriate option in the correct circumstances and location.

The question that will need to be resolved in these situations is where will the surface water go instead? Most other surface water systems are approaching their finite capacity and will require the installation of significant infrastructure to deal with the flows. Who will pay and be responsible for this? Care will also need to be taken to ensure that flood risk is not being increased elsewhere within the WRC's catchment for another RMA to deal with as a result.

As the approval and consent of other RMAs may also be required prior detailed consultation with the parties involved MUST be undertaken and agreed BEFORE work commences.

NB: In respect of this document, infiltration refers to groundwater entering the sewer system which increases hydraulic loadings and threatens wastewater treatment efficiency.

Water level Management Solutions

The use of SuDS, wetlands and other green structures is considered to be an appropriate option in the correct circumstances and location.

The management of SuDS and other water level management systems is an on-going challenge for many RMAs. Without suitable arrangements being imposed these could simply become potential liabilities for the various rate/bill payers. Therefore, adequate arrangements MUST be made to ensure that the long-term ownership funding, management and maintenance for the upkeep of any green infrastructure, whether on or off site, in perpetuity is achieved.

Consideration also needs to be given to any restrictions upon maintenance of the drainage “facility” due to the presence of protected habitats and species.

As the approval and consent of other RMAs may also be required prior detailed consultation with the parties involved MUST be undertaken and agreed BEFORE work commences.

Partnership Working

The Commissioners and associated Boards are prepared to work in partnership with the local community, private and public partners to contribute to and deliver schemes for conservation, navigation, water resources, water level & flood risk management where there is a mutual benefit to the partners concerned.

However, to what extent they are prepared to contribute would be the subject of a decision for the respective authority and this may vary dependent upon their views.

Relevant extracts from the draft DWMP are included below.

Programme outputs

Extract from Anglian Water's Risk Based Catchment Screening (RBCS) Map showing the extent of the WRC catchments in the Commissioners' area

Tipps End WRC

This WRC serves Welney, Tipps End and Christchurch. An increase in population of 138 by 2050 was used in the BRAVA/RBCS process but, being a relatively new facility, this increase is likely to have been included in the original design. Despite the raising of concerns no risk has been identified and a "wait and see" approach has been suggested by Anglian Water.

Manea – Town Lots WRC

An increase in population of 355 by 2050 was used for Manea – Town Lots WRC, which only serves Manea Village. This represents an increase of 20% of the current population.

The medium-term strategy is to remove infiltration, presumably by removing surface water connections, lining sewers etc. No long-term strategy has been identified.

L3 water recycling catchment	2021 population	2035 population	2050 population	Passed RBCS	Resilience risk score	Planning objective themes reviewed	Stakeholder concerns/ comments	Medium term strategy	2050 Strategy	Partnership opportunities identified
MANEA - TOWN LOTS	1720	1947	2075	Yes	0	WRC compliance Environment and wellbeing	Flood risk implications.	Infiltration removal	No risk identified.	-
TIPPS END	236	360	374	Yes	0	Escape from sewers WRC compliance Environment and wellbeing	Flood risk implications.	No risk identified.	Wait and see.	-

Extracts from Anglian Water's draft Drainage and Wastewater Management plan showing the results and proposed plans for Manea-Town Lots and Tipps End WRC

WRC Compliance

The quality of the discharge does not appear to be a cause for concern. However, members will be aware of Natural England’s concerns about nutrients affecting the Ouse Washes system.

Due to the proximity of the discharge to the Ouse Washes a nutrient neutrality assessment will be required to support future consent applications.

The final DWMP document is currently being prepared and is due to be published this spring.

If it is considered appropriate a meeting with Anglian Water’s DWMP and Water Recycling Growth Manager can be organised to enable the Commissioners views to be known to enable further discussion to occur, as required.

Norfolk Water Management Partnership [Norfolk County Council (LLFA)]

No further correspondence has been received and no further action has been taken on the Board’s behalf.

The Investigation Report into the flooding in Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough in Winter 2020-2021 Report Reference: FIR066 can be viewed at:

FIR066 Kings Lynn WN Winter Flood Event 2020 21 (1).pdf

The report does not refer to any flooding incidents within the Board’s catchment.

Norfolk Water Strategy Programme (NWSP)

The MLC Planning Engineer has attended a Steering Group Meeting and Webinar associated with this programme.

Water Resources East (WRE) released a progress report in June which was the subject of a consultation process. Unfortunately, due to annual leave and workload commitments, it was not possible to provide a response before the deadline.

Currently the programme is prioritising the Broadland River catchments to the east of Norfolk – Rivers Ant, Bure, Wensum and Yare which are outside of the Board's area of interest.

However, there is a strong emphasis on Natural Based Solutions (NBS) and in the absence of any material information on these an indication of costs, advice on suitable consultants who deal with such features examples of good practice and any solutions that have been adopted has been requested but a response has not yet been received.

Copies of the webinar presentation and Progress Report can be viewed at:

PowerPoint Presentation (wre.org.uk)

NWSP-June-2022-Progress-Report-FINAL.pdf (wre.org.uk)

General Advice

Assistance has been given, on the Commissioners' behalf, in respect of the following:

(a) A byelaw infringement alongside the Old Croft River at Welney is currently being dealt with, which involves the erection of fence panels and the planting of trees within the nine metre byelaw strip without the necessary consent.

Consulting Engineer

23 January 2023

Manea & Welney (317)\Reports\January 2023

Mr Hill referred to the discussions at the Finance Committee meeting concerning riparian owner responsibilities and their recommendation to use available information leaflets to notify affected land/property owners to clearly set out the duties of the Commissioners and their responsibilities as riparian owners.

Cllrs Crofts queried the future ownership of the access bridge to the Grange Farm Development.

In response to the Chairman, Mr Hill confirmed that he had spoken with the Planning Engineer, who confirmed there were no further updates to the planning matters in the report.

RESOLVED

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

ii) That the Clerk investigate sending letters/leaflets information detailing riparian owner responsibilities to affected residents.

iii) That the Planning Engineer confirm the position concerning future ownership/maintenance responsibilities of the access ridge to the Grange Farm development and in receipt of this information, the Chairman and Clerk be authorised to take any further action as they consider necessary.

C.971 Pumping Stations

The Chairman reported that both pumping stations were in satisfactorily condition and there had been a few minor problems during the year which had been attended to by either the District Superintendent or the Consulting Engineer. He reported that the pumping arrangements had been changed in view of current electricity costs.

C.972 District Superintendent's wages, pension contributions and Future Labour Requirements

The Chairman reported on the discussions and the recommendations of the Finance Committee;

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners approve the recommendations of the Finance Committee;

i) That the Chairman be authorised to review a pay award with the District Superintendent and to make arrangement he considers appropriate

ii) That the Commissioners' pension contribution remains unchanged at 8% from 1st April 2023, but be increased to match the rate paid by the District Superintendent up to a maximum of 10%.

C.973 Capital Improvement Programme

The Commissioners considered their future capital improvement programme, viz;

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners

Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)

		PREVIOUS YEARS	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	FUTURE YEARS	ALL YEARS
		Pre Yr 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Post Year 10	Total Expenditure
Glenhouse p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	750.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	750.0
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Purls Bridge p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	70.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	John Deere Tractor - *purchased April 2020 - £111,480*	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	85.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	85.0
	Herder Cavalier Flail Mower - *purchased June 2020 - £71,100*	4	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	65.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	69.0
	Citroen van - *purchased 13/03/2015 - £8,753*	0	0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0
Drainage Channels														
		0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		4	**0**	**860**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**150**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**1,029**

Consideration for:
Electrification/refurbishment at Glenhouse pumpinh station
Replacement of Citroen van

Meeting 02.02.2022
Approved purchase of bucket
Approved to carry forward van replacement to following year

F:\Admin\Word\manea+welney\mins\8.2.23

The Chairman reported on the progress for an application to be made for Grant-in-Aid to convert two of the diesel pumps at Glenhouse Pumping Station to electricity and was hopeful that the scheme could attract significant grant funding.

Mr Walker queried the threshold for fish friendly pumps and the Chairman confirmed that they would have to comply with the regulations which were triggered by the scale of works involved and it was likely that they would need to be considered as part of the application process.

Mr Fairey queried if alternative fuel sources could be utilised in any refurbishment programme at the station.

Mr Burrows reported on the impact of the eel regulations and proposals being considered with the new Chief Engineer at the Middle Level to look for larger scale 'group' projects to maximise opportunities for grant allocation.

In response to Mr Hill, the Chairman considered that there was likely to already be sufficient electricity supply to the station for two electric powered motors. Mr Hill reported that the current estimate in the programme included an element for the provision of the electrical supply and that the costs would be updated when further information became available.

The Chairman reported that the Finance Committee had recommended the works van should be kept for a further year and replaced in the 2024/2025 financial year.

RESOLVED

> That the Capital Improvement Programme be approved in principle and be updated as more information became available with regards to the improvement scheme at Glenhouse Pumping Station.

C.974 Conservation Officer's Newsletter

Mr Hill referred to the Conservations Officers newsletter, viz;

MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS

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Website: **www.middlelevel.gov.uk**

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Sofi Lloyd
Environment Officer

Manea & Welney IDB

Environmental Update – January 2023

Introduction
As I took up post in mid-October, unfortunately I am not in a position to provide a full biodiversity action plan update yet, but have compiled the following general update of environmental activities and key points, which I hope you find useful.

I visited the IDB area late in December with John Heading and Andy Maddams, on a frosty morning and was delighted to see a very dense assemblage of biodiversity in the area. The habitat provided is obviously plentiful enough and is being managed in a way that is supportive of a wide range of wildlife. No doubt the consistent water levels that are maintained year-round provides a strong foundation for the rich local biodiversity and will also be reducing the carbon emissions lost from any areas of peat soil. There is also a good provision of managed hedgerows and some small woodland patches which are valuable to many species and provide refuge and foraging corridors across the farmed landscape. Where hedgerows are provided in addition to channels rather than instead of them, this is welcome. The current rotational cutting of ditch vegetation i.e. cutting different sides in different years will also be beneficial and should be maintained on a 2-3 year rotational basis across different areas. There are a couple of small areas where the Chairman wishes to enhance wildlife provisions and has asked me to recommend some approaches to do so. I would like to get to know the area further so would like to plan further visits in the spring.

1. Process and compliance review
I have taken the opportunity over the quieter winter months, to commence a thorough process and compliance review of all our environmental approaches across all boards. This will help to ensure that IDBs are operating in line with all new legislative and regulatory requirements, updated guidance and best practice, and are better prepared for any changes we expect to be introduced in the next year. This will include the impacts and opportunities brought forward by the Environment Act 2021, including biodiversity net gain and delivering biodiversity enhancement. The outcomes of this review will feed into the BAP refresh for each IDB.

I also plan to review pre-application environmental advice for consents and standard responses with the planning office.

2. GIS system development
To support the activities mentioned above, an improved environmental GIS system is being developed and work is well underway to digitise all environmental data. Lots of data exists due to all the good work already undertaken by IDBs but it exists in different states in different places. There is also a great deal of information held by the Local Environmental Records Centres relevant to the district which would be beneficial for us to access and review when planning our work. We need to merge these data sets to develop a consolidated, full picture of what we have, in order to define and preserve the baseline from which to progress. This, more complete, picture is necessary to enable us to identify opportunities for environmental enhancement. Developing the GIS system this way will deliver efficiencies in environmental data collection, analysis and reporting, allowing more time to undertake practical conservation work on the

ground. It will also enable us to share our data more easily with the local environmental records centres, contributing to the understanding of the local and national status of many species and help to raise the profile of the IDB and the valuable work they do to support biodiversity.

3. Protected Species - General

As always, any work that plans to "break ground" on the bank top or face, so anything other than vegetation cutting, i.e., bank reformation, mooring construction, culverting, head walls, piling etc, **please let me know ASAP before the end of February** so we can plan the appropriate surveys and mitigations in plenty of time, to avoid any delays and ensure compliance with wildlife legislation. This is particularly relevant for water voles.

There are likely to be changes required to how we manage a number of protected species during the course of our water level management work in the coming months, including badgers and water voles. These are some of the processes currently under review and I will of course be in touch to discuss these in more detail as soon as possible.

a) Badgers

A reminder that badgers and their setts are protected by law and care must be taken not to disturb setts during routine channel management. Sett interference requires a licence under all circumstances. Please contact us should you have any queries regarding activities taking place around any known badger sett. Please also let me know asap if there are any setts which are presenting a flood risk due to any burrowing which is destabilising banks etc. More detailed information and refresher training on approaches to be taken around badger setts will be organised in the coming months. In the meantime, please refer to the relevant chapter in the Environmental Good Governance Guide (available on the ADA website) for more detailed information on badgers.

b) Birds

Please be reminded of the legislation around the disturbance of birds, particularly when cutting vegetation, between March and September. Please see the relevant chapter in the Environmental Good Governance Guide (available on the ADA website) to refresh your understanding of mitigation and survey requirements and get in touch should you have any questions.

i. Barn owls

I have met with our barn owl conservation delivery partners and we had defined a schedule of checking and refreshing barn owl boxes over winter but have unfortunately been unable to commence due to the restrictions imposed by BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) due to avian flu. We will continue to monitor the guidance and act accordingly and may be able to begin checking boxes next week providing strict biosecurity measures are followed. We really hope to be in a position to have checked all boxes by the start of the breeding season if possible. It is even more important during these times that you please help us with the following:

- Tell ASAP us if any work on pumping stations is planned in 2023 so boxes can be relocated before the breeding season (March-Aug)
- Tell us if you spot a box needing repair
- Tell us if you see a box being regularly visited in nesting season
- Tell us if you'd like a barn owl box
- Establish and maintain un-cropped field margins for foraging

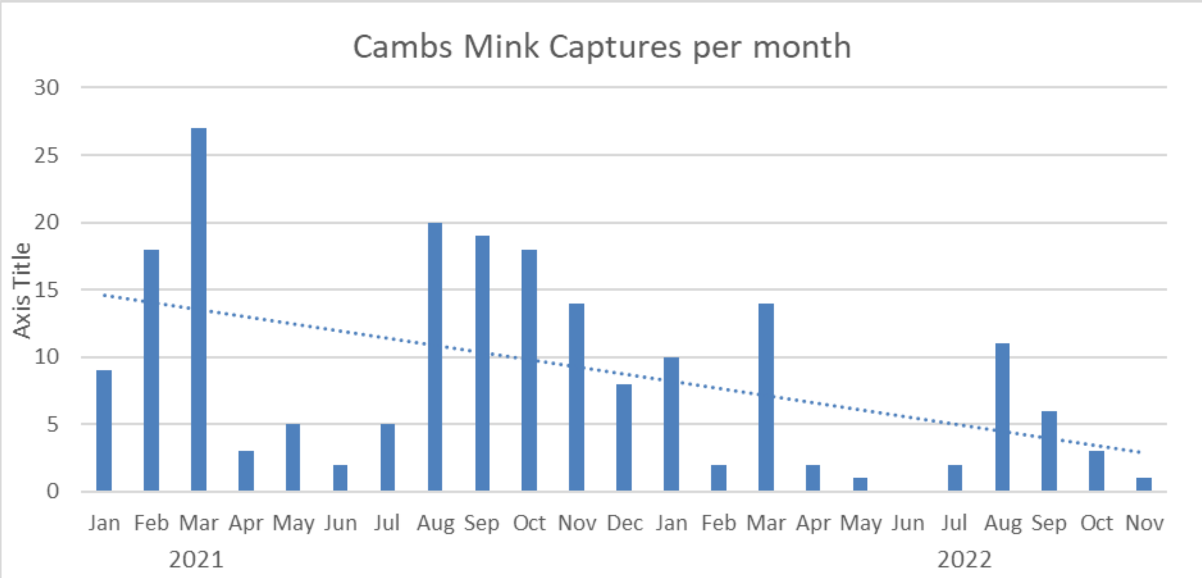
ii. Avian Flu

Please ensure that you are familiar with, **and promote the knowledge of** the DEFRA guidelines on avian flu, in particular those for reporting suspected cases: [Bird flu (avian influenza): latest situation in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]

c) Mink & Water Voles

I am now involved with the co-ordination of the mink control strategy for IDBs in the MLC area. The mink control project has been hugely successful so the vision of full eradication of mink is becoming much closer to being realised than was ever thought possible. A strategy refresh meeting took place on the 9th January where we reviewed the data to date to help us devise an updated trapping regime for the coming months. The key outcomes of which are that we are very much in **need of further volunteers** to respond to mink raft activation alerts in the area. Any activation would need to be attended promptly within a few hours but the need to respond is likely to be very occasional. Please let me know of any interest.

The following chart shows the number of mink caught each month, suggesting a declining population.



The following table shows the number of Mink caught in 2022 and their locations, compared to 62 mink captures or kills in 2021.

Middle Level mink 2022_List

List of mink captures around the Middle Level in 2022

	Animal Code	Station/Location	Date	Sex
1	WRE/0761	Upwell & Outwell: Laddus Drove holt	09 Jan 2022	Male
2	WRE/0789		11 Jan 2022	Unrecorded
3	WRE/0917	Stonea Bridge	24 Jan 2022	Female
4	WRE/0786	Ramsey: PS Ramsey Hollow	24 Jan 2022	Female
5	WRE/0924	Welches Dam PS bridge SW side	10 Mar 2022	Male
6	WRE/0950	Conington Fen Bridge	13 Mar 2022	Female
7	WRE/0944	Ransonmoor: Staffurth's Bridge PS outfall, Old ...	16 Mar 2022	Male
8	WRE/0946	Ramsey Saint Mary's: Speed the Plough Bridge	17 Mar 2022	Male
9	WRE/0951	Twenty Foot, Coldham Bank	22 Mar 2022	Male
10	WRE/0957	Crooked Drain, Sutton Gault	05 Apr 2022	Female
11	WRE/0966	Crooked Drain, Sutton Gault	26 Apr 2022	Female
12	WRE/1046	Great Fen: Charterhouse Farm Bridge	16 Sep 2022	Female
13	WRE/1047	Woodwalton Fen: south	18 Sep 2022	Male
14	WRE/1081	Pingles Pit, Mepal B	21 Oct 2022	Female
15	WRE/1140	Welches Dam PS bridge SW side	27 Nov 2022	Unrecorded

This progress with mink control will positively impact on the abundance of water voles in the area. Previous water vole survey data will be reviewed over winter and added to the GIS system and further surveys will be planned to take place in spring and summer.

We have another mink raft that is allocated to the IDB and we would like permission to site this in a drain north-west of Bottom farm if possible. Please let me know and we will get it placed ASAP prior to breeding season.

As above, any planned work that will "break ground" on the bank top or face, so anything other than vegetation cutting, i.e., bank reformation, mooring construction, culverting, head walls, piling etc, **please let me know ASAP before the end of February** so we can plan the appropriate water vole surveys and mitigations in plenty of time, to avoid any delays and ensure compliance with water vole legislation.

4. Invasive species

When any non-native species (particularly the following) are spotted, please record the location using the what3words app (what3words /// The simplest way to talk about location) if possible (if not postcode or grid ref) and inform us ASAP. Useful identification guides and information can be found online at ID sheets » NNSS (nonnativespecies.org)

- Floating Pennywort
- Mink
- Himalayan Balsam
- Parrot's feather
- New Zealand pigmyweed (Australian swamp stonecrop - Crassula)

d) Floating Pennywort

Floating Pennywort continues to be an issue in other watercourses just outside the MLC area, so we urge you to remain vigilant, refresh your identification skills and act promptly by notifying us if you think you may have spotted any in the districts drains. Strong adherence to biosecurity procedures is vital as per the boards policy (available from the website).

There has been good progress in trialling the use of an imported weevil to control the plant so we hope that if the success continues, it may be made available nationally at some point in the future.

e) Azolla

Common across the MLC area. Please record and notify us as above. There may be an opportunity to use an approved weevil to control badly affected stretches so please advise if there are any particular areas of concern as there are only limited stocks of the weevils nationally so I will have to apply early to be in with a chance of some of the stock.

f) Chinese Mitten Crabs

Chinese mitten crabs and their apparent rapidly increasing population continue to be a concern. There are reports of some banks in some areas being damaged by their extensive burrowing but it is always difficult to pin this on the crabs alone with there being so many other factors which affect the stability of banks.

We liaise closely with the EA and follow their lead with the management of this species and many others to ensure that nothing we do contradicts their approach, regulation or legislation. Defra has no intention currently of developing policy which would allow the crabs to be caught and removed for commercial or conservation reasons. In particular there was some concern that they were found to carry a gill fluke in other counties which had the potential of being transmitted to humans if they were to be consumed. As Defra isn't planning to change their stance, the EA's approach remains that any crabs which are caught as by-catch must be killed on-site and not removed. The fishing for the crabs specifically is not lawful. There is no recommended or authorised approach to deal with rising populations unfortunately. A commonly held view is that removing mature individuals from the population creates a vacuum that immature individuals then tussle to fill, driving greater movement within the local population and perhaps increased burrowing as a result.

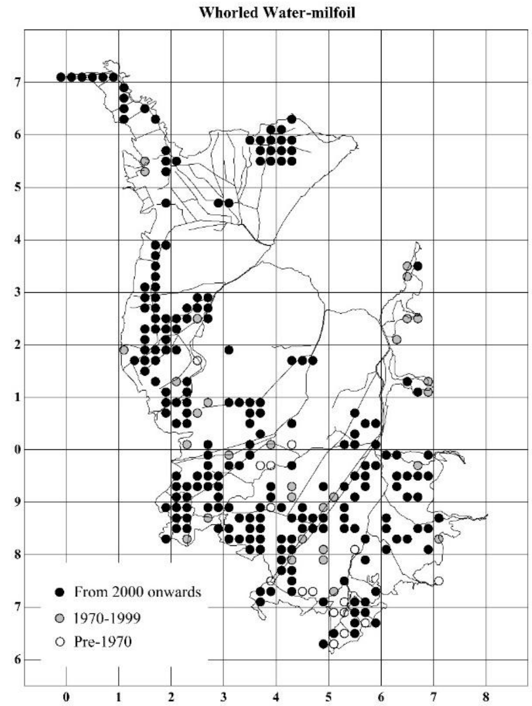
We will continue to monitor the recommended approaches and will adapt ours promptly to follow when necessary.

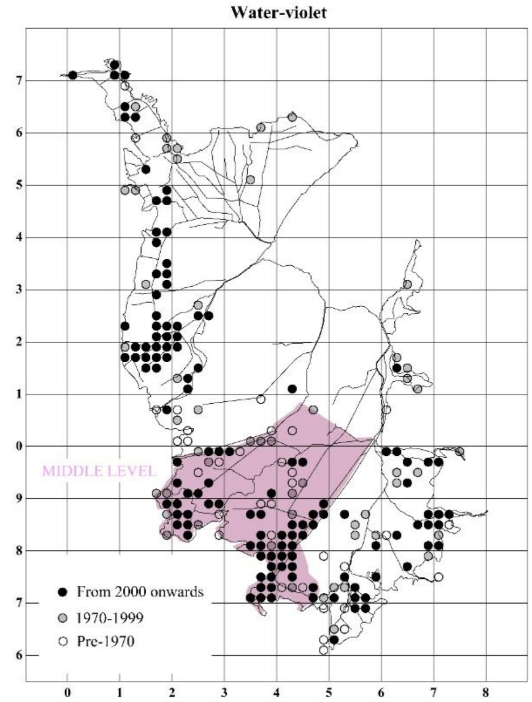
5. Fenland Flora Project

The long-running fenland flora project, headed up by botanist Jonathan Graham, to identify and record the presence of rare, threatened and notable aquatic plants in the fens, is nearing completion. The results highlight:

- There are lots of nationally significant aquatic plants in fens, many of which are only found in IDB drains and are present because of the way the drain is being managed.
- Water quality is important for many aquatic plants and a good proportion of IDB drains have good water quality.
- A summer-maintained water level is good for many plants.
- Non-IDB field drains are important too so where possible, aim to always hold some water and cut periodically.

The diagrams below show how the presence of 2 England red data plants that are frequent in local drains.





The plant location data will be added to the GIS system and made available so it can be reviewed ahead of any planed works, and will be added to BAPs. The data will also be useful in identifying any opportunities to enhance these valuable plant populations.

6. Eels

A number of PHD studies of eels as part of the REDEEM (Research and Development of fish and Eel Entrainment Mitigation at pumping stations) project, headed by Jon Bolland at Hull Fisheries Institute have completed and have helped us to better understand eel and coarse fish ecology and their interaction and behaviour within pumped catchments and pumping stations. Further studies are now commencing to strengthen this knowledge. The use of eDNA surveying to identify eels within catchments is being progressed and samples from throughout the MLC areas are being tested. These studies will inform and revise guidance for mitigating fish and eel entrainment at pumping stations within the area and will assist with IDB BAP development. Please contact us if you would like us to study coarse fish or eels at your pumping station.

Guidance on the new eels regulations process has been delayed but the new options to achieve eel protection, including fish friendly pumps, are available.

Wherever possible, retain marginal vegetation, even if it's only a narrow strip, to support eels.

7. Environmental Stewardship.

You will most likely be aware that environmental stewardship schemes and farming subsidies are changing. If you would like to discuss existing stewardship provisions within the district, or you or another rate payer is thinking of applying for a stewardship agreement or establishing new stewardship measures, please do get in touch.

8. Carbon & Climate

There are increasingly a number of low-carbon, sustainable alternatives available for many of the common materials and equipment used in flood risk management, such as low-carbon concrete and steel, solar powered mechanical and electrical equipment and coir roll for bank stabilisation. Please get in touch to discuss any projects which involve these or similar materials or equipment to understand if any are suitable for you to consider.

Last year ADA published a Carbon Accounting Guide for IDBs, which is available from their website. The process of calculating carbon emissions does not have to be as complicated as some may think. If you have reviewed the guide and would like some help to progress with calculating your carbon emissions, please get in touch.

9. Paludiculture

I attended a workshop in Cambridge to discuss the progress of knowledge acquisition and trials around growing commercial crops, associated with wetlands in lowland areas, where the water level has been raised to reduce or eliminate CO_2 emissions from degraded peat. This is known as paludiculture. This includes the potential for receiving an income for carbon sequestration from such approaches. As you would expect, there is a focus on the Cambridgeshire fens as a key area for development of this approach along with Somerset, Lancashire and the Lincs fens. If you would like to know more about how this topic is progressing, would like to get involved in some trials or would like to have a go at growing a paludiculture crop such as Typha latifolia (Bullrush or cattail) or Sphagnum moss yourself commercially, then please do get in touch.

10. Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDBs

I have a copy of the above guide, published by ADA last September, for each Chairman and District Officer which I can hand to you when I visit if you don't have a copy already. Until then, an on-line version is available from **here** and you can also request copies from ADA directly admin@ada.org.uk. ADA are planning workshops on the 2nd February to help deliver some of the key topics of the guide in more detail and to allow the opportunity for more contextualised discussions.

C.975 District Superintendent's Report

The Commissioners considered the Report of the District Superintendent, viz;

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners Superintendent's Report 2023

2022 was a funny old year.

It was the driest since 2014 with a total rainfall of 522.5mm, but was not much drier than 2017 or 2018.
The driest month, unsurprisingly, was July at 6mm. Wettest was October at 86.5mm. There were no other 'stand out' months of dry or wet weather, but the rain in the summer months seemed to arrive as very short, sharp events in otherwise long, dry, settled periods.
The rolling five year average dropped by 3.25mm to 624.5mm, which indicates that 2022 was not unusually dry, but it was hot.
Dry, breezy heat caused more problems than the level of rainfall. Very prolonged, high temperatures coupled with those warm breezes evaporated water from the drains at an alarming rate, more about the consequences of that later.

In a move that seemed to throw caution well and truly to the wind, the pumps were switched off on January 27th, yes, January. Flow rates had been so low, there was concern that we might struggle to get up to the summer retention level of 98.0 without recourse to the slacker. February brought us Storm Dudley, but he was mainly a load of wind, and didn't really affect the levels. Hot on Dudley's heels came Storm Eunice, again not much rain but a whole lot of wind. Next door lost their brand new polytunnel, but the District hatches were well and truly battened down until after the storm had passed, and we suffered no damage. Drain levels did creep up a little, and so manually controlled pumping was used to keep the level trimmed to 98.0 for a few days and on March 10th the pumps were off again, and stayed off until September 6th. The September pumping was extremely cautious in order to prevent any fish kills, but was needed to draw down to the maintenance level of 97.2 prior to the arrival of the 360 later in the month.

Spring mowing began on April 5th and continued, erratically at times (more about that later) until November 8th. The mowing basket was used from the late summer to give a good working edge for the 360, but not as much as I hoped was cut before the 360 caught me up, more about that later. The little dredging bucket was used a few times in the autumn, and proved to be a very useful, if rather occasional tool.

Total distances maintained are as follows,

Flailed (at least once, but mostly two or three times) 29,600m
Bucket cut 17,200m
Dredged 700m
Cleaned by 360 18,500m
Non District drains flailed 3,500m

There is good evidence that with the superior flail mower and mowing basket being used together, certain areas of the District will require less attention from the 360 as we go forward, and hopefully costs will be reduced accordingly.

On May 23rd I met with John Lampard and his EA Hydrology Team at Salters Lode, in order to explain they way our District works in relation to the Old Bedford River, and our water requirements. The Slacker had been opened on April 25th. I find that once the District levels are where I wish them to be, running the slacker permanently at around ⅓ bore just keeps topping up nicely. Our 32 kms of drains take some filling with only one gravity feed, 12" pipe, and by not letting the level drop, I can trickle feed water all the time and maintain an almost constant level. While we were meeting, the MLC lock keeper, who had been operating the Old Bedford Sluice on behalf of the EA, declared that he wished to stand down from covering that duty. This really left us in a bit of a pickle. Not only was John Lampard a wee bit taken aback, but alternative arrangements needed to be made. As I was already taking water, I suggested that in the short term I would carry out water transfers through the sluice, and review the situation with both John Lampard and our Chairman. If only I kept my big mouth shut! As the summer heated up, it became clear that maintaining a working level in the OBR was going to be a near full time job. We called in help from David at Sutton & Mepal as well as various MLC staff members who were conversant with the protocols. It became increasingly difficult, as the weather got hotter, evaporation rates rose enormously, as tides got bigger and the salt levels rose to unusual extremes, to get meaningful transfers completed. At times I would meet a morning tide and David would meet the afternoon one. The struggle continued until July 13th, when the EA required us to close the slacker due to low levels in the OBR. We opened again on July 25th after getting the river level up during the closed period. Again on August 1st we were shut down, re-opening on August 9th. I carried out my last transfer on August 25th, by which time I was at least six weeks behind in my preparations for the 360 arriving. In all, I made 44 attendances to Salters Lode, which amounted to 210.5 hours of work. This included 20 attendances before 6am, the earliest being July 21st when I was on duty at 1.15am to meet the tide.
As footnote to this effort, on November 21st Mr John Heading chaired a meeting of EA, MLC, M&W DDC, S&M IDB and U IDB staff to discuss ways of improving matters for next year, working to the theory that 2023 will be at least as difficult.

The 360 arrived in the District on September 20th, and I was just about able to keep pace with him on the drains between Welney and the railway. Because of the time lost to me at Salters Lode, I hadn't mowed some areas between the railway and Purls Bridge, and by the time they were flailed, there was no time to trim the toe of the bank with the Mowing Basket. With the 360 catching me up, it was as much as I could do to get everything mown in front of him. The delays had occurred because daytime tides at Salters Lode left no time for travelling any distance to mow before or after going to carry out the transfer. In the end I just managed to finish the last length of drain as the 360 hove into view to start on it, phew!

Machinery wise, the District has been fairly quiet. The Pumps have chuntered along reliably, needing little more than routine checking and lubrication. MLC engineers replaced the wire ropes on the Purls Bridge weedscreen cleaner, they had been identified as worn out by the insurance engineer. A curious and intermittent fault in a valve block on the Glen House weedscreen cleaner caused some head scratching, but was solved by MLC engineers. The mains battery charger on No3 set at Glen House failed, a replacement was supplied by MLC and fitted by myself.
On July 27/28th, a new telemetry system was fitted to both stations. This allows me to access level readings, pump and weedscreen cleaner status, and any failed plant via my phone.

The John Deere 6175R has been boring in its reliability, diesel consumption averaged 10lts/hour, and needed no more than weekly greasing and filter cleaning. A 1500 hours service was carried out in May. Sadly, on June 16th, in a moment of total inattention, I contrived to catch a front wing on a fence post and shatter its' cast mounting, not realising quite what was going on until I ran the front wing over. Much, very dry, humble pie was consumed as I confessed to our Chairman, but at least the replacement parts could be fitted by myself. On August 11th an accumulation of reed trash began to smoulder at the base of the exhaust, fortunately the smell roused my suspicion before a conflagration could ensue. I now keep a close eye on the exhaust shroud and clean it very regularly.

The Herder Cavalier has given little cause for concern. A hydraulic hose burst on July 19th, which when inspected closely showed that where the hoses are routed over the lift arm of the tractor, there is the opportunity for the hose to chafe. A replacement hose was sourced and I made a plastic protector to prevent further damage. A small leak developed in a solenoid valve on the pump assembly towards the end of the summer. It was a simple matter of removing the valve and replacing the 'O' rings. I suspect the very high working temperatures of the summer had caused the seals to become hard, thus causing the failure.

Once again the Citroen Berlingo has been a reliable machine, routine servicing, a couple of punctures and a suspension link failure being the only major troubles. As fuel prices rose, I removed the roof bars to improve the streamlining and the 2022 fuel consumption was recorded at 53.4mpg, 2021 being 48, so there was a small saving there.
Another energy saving idea has been to switch off the Purls Bridge pumps during the beginning of the winter. The flow levels have been quite low, and Glen House was keeping the District drain without the electric pumps being needed. Whether we can keep this up into the spring remains to be seen, but the saving in energy must be worth the effort. Incidentally, due to the very clean nature of the drains, the weedscreen cleaners are also off, also saving some electricity costs.

I am confident that the District is in a very good state, both for winter drainage and summer water management. There is good evidence of excellent habitat developing due to our current four year rotation of mowing. Apex predators are in abundance, and they are a fine barometer for habitat wellbeing. Water quality is also in a good state, several decent sized pike have been caught during the autumn, and if they are there, everything else must be doing well. Kingfishers are a daily sight at Glen House, as are pied wagtail and hunting barn owls.
Mink trapping has been so successful in the Fens, my traps have only been troubled by a moorhen and a stoat. It looks as though we are getting the better of the Mink at last. Thankfully we have suffered no real problems from badger excavations in the banks, not that there is very much we would be allowed to do if there were issues.

As usual, I finish on a personal note. It has been a hard grind during 2022. The long hours involved at Salters Lode were necessary, but wearing. We have a very poorly, and challenging foster baby at home, which makes for some interesting times. By the time he was 36 weeks old, he'd been to 36 hospital appointments! I continue to donate platelets for NHS Blood and Transplant, clocking up number 340 on Christmas Eve. Both the brass and dance bands have been busy gigging this summer and I finally took my summer leave in November, and to keep my 1954 Ford Popular company, I bought a Ledbury Maestro (I'll let you look it up), as if one strange car wasn't enough.

I extend my thanks to John Heading for his gentle guidance and support through a busy and challenging year.

Cllr Crofts considered the District Superintendents report to be the most comprehensive he has seen and the Superintendent should be thanked for both the quality of his work in the District and also of his reports.

RESOLVED

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

ii) That the Chairman thank the Superintendent for the quality of his Report and for his services over the preceding year.

C.976 Maintenance Works in the District

The Chairman reported that the majority of works last year had been completed in accordance with the Commissioners Maintenance Programme and it was intended to carry out works for the coming year in line with the Programme again.

He reported that he considered the watercourses were in good order and requested if any Member had concerns over any section of the District system, that they should contact him.

RESOLVED

To continue with the Commissioners' annual maintenance programme in 2023/2024.

C.977 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.

Mr Hill reported that the proposals for the electrification of 2 pumps at Glen House pumping station would be progressed with the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to take any actions he considers appropriate to progress the future availability of grant funding for schemes promoted by the Commissioners.

C.978 Environment Agency – Precept

Mr Hill reported that at the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee determined that there were exceptional circumstances to consider on the agreed 2% increase on the precepts on Internal Drainage Boards. The Committee voted for an additional 1% increase (reflecting exceptional circumstances) above the agreed 2% for the year ending 31st March 2024 – total of a 3% increase on the level of precept on Internal Drainage Boards for the year ending 31st March 2024.

C.979 Claims for Highland Water Contributions – Section 57 Land Drainage Act 1991

Mr Hill reported that following his submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £157.26 (£704.42 less £547.16 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency for the financial year 2021/2022 based on the Board's actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year and the sum of £680.38 in respect of 80% of the Board's estimated expenditure for the financial year 2022/2023.

C.980 Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions

Mr Hill reported that ADA has increased subscriptions by 4.5% for 2023. The subscription for 2022 was £642, will be £679 for 2023.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription for 2023 be paid.

(NB) – The Chairman declared an interest as a Director of ADA

C.981 Contribution from Developers

Mr Hill reported that contributions towards the cost of dealing with the increased flow or volume of surface water run-off and treated effluent volume had been received.

C.982 Health and Safety

Further to minute C.946, the Chairman reported that Cope Safety Management had a planned visit on 20th February 2023 and that all matters previously discussed with Cope had been attended too.

C.983 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Commissioners – 2021/2022

a) The Commissioners considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2022, viz;

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2022

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015 /234)

1 The Audit of accounts for the Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners for the year ended 31st March 2022 has been completed and the accounts have been published.

2 The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners on application to:

The Clerk
Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

between the hours of 9.00am and 4.00pm on Mondays to Fridays (excluding public holidays), when any local elector may make copies of the Annual Return.

3 Copies will be provided to any local elector on payment of £2.40 for each copy of the Annual Return

Announcement made by: D C Thomas - Clerk to the Commissioners

Date of Announcement: 26th September 2022

Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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During the financial year ended 31 March 2022, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2021/22 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2020/21, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓
L. The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements	✓		
M. The authority, during the previous year (2020-21) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2020/21 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

	Yes	No	Not applicable
O. **(For local councils only)** Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 27/06/2022 15/07/2022 15/07/2022

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: WHITINGS LLP

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: R. BEECH - WHITINGS LLP

Date: 15/07/2022

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

We acknowledge as the members of:

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022, that:

	Agreed Yes	Agreed No*	'Yes' means that this authority:
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✔		*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✔		*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✔		*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✔		*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✔		*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✔		*arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✔		*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✔		*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*

9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	*has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

22/06/2022

and recorded as minute reference:

C.957

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman John E Harding

Clerk [signature]

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending 31 March 2021 £	Year ending 31 March 2022 £	Notes and guidance: Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.
1. Balances brought forward	548,939	417,132	*Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.*
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	189,924	194,563	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	41,471	3,384	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	33,930	34,013	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	329,272	161,480	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	417,132	419,586	*Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).*
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	459,703	454,922	*The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.*
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	2,607,628	2,611,078	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	N/A	*The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.*
				N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2022 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 24/05/2022

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

22/06/2022

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE C.958

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED John E Harding

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of **MANEA AND WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS – DB0046**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review **is not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/ .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with Proper Practices which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2022; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor report 2021/22

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2021/22

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2022.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature PKF Littlejohn LLP Date 11/09/2022

* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)

b) The Commissioners considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2022, viz;

Whitings
Chartered Accountants LLP
The Old School House, Dartford Road
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8AE
t: 01354 652304
e: march@whitingsllp.co.uk
w: whitingsllp.co.uk

BB/MM053
11 October 2022

Messrs. D Thomas, R Hill and S Ablett
Middle Level Offices
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambs
PE15 0AH

Dear Messrs. D Thomas, R. Hill, and S Ablett,

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2021-2022

Having completed the internal audit work for the various Internal Drainage Boards administered by the Middle Level Commissioners officers for the year ended 31 March 2022, we are pleased to provide you with the following recommendations to be considered for implementation. We have included some general points and some points which are related to specific boards.

<u>General points</u>

1. **Asset Valuations and Insurances**

   It is noted that, whilst a large proportion of boards took the option to revalue for insurance purposes their pumping station and residential assets during recent years, there are still some boards that have not followed suit. We have seen elsewhere that such revaluations have sometimes resulted in significant uplifts in value, and as such we would suggest that any remaining boards that have yet to carry out such an exercise do so at the earliest convenience. Should a pumping station or residential property require a complete rebuild following an unforeseen catastrophic event, current valuations may no longer be appropriate given today's prices which may lead to a shortfall in funds which have to be met by surplus funds.

   We would recommend that in the absence of specific information to the contrary suggesting need for earlier review, that a revaluation exercise be performed for insurance purposes at least every 5 years on all major Board assets. This is especially important given the significant increase in material and labour costs seen in recent times as a result of rising inflation and global material shortages. However we are pleased to note that boards are being asked whether they wish for insurance to be index linked going forward and would strong suggest that all boards agree to this proposal.

1. **Asset Valuations and Insurances - Continued**

<u>*Client comment:*</u>
While we have put it to Boards to review pumping station valuations for insurance purposes, as separate statutory authorities it is up to each Board to review and approve what they consider to be an appropriate valuation and your point concerning possible under-insured amounts having to be funded directly by the Board following an event has been highlighted previously. A number of Boards have previously approved to index link valuations and we will be asking all Boards to consider this during the 2023 meetings, along with consideration of current valuations. This is an area already programmed to be reviewed every five years and hopefully with indexing we may not require such individual valuations going forward.

2. **Employee Benefits - Vehicle Usage**
In 2020 a high level tax case was brought by HM Revenue & Customs against Coca-Cola European Partners Great Britain Limited relating to vehicles provided to employees of Coca-Cola and whether these 'dual purpose' vehicles should be classed as a van or a car for benefit-in-kind (BIK) and other taxation purposes. Typical example of such a vehicle being a double-cab pickup as operated by some boards. The Court of Appeal ruled in favour of HMRC and, as a result HMRC are now reminding employers of the importance to ensure that they have classified their vehicles correctly and as a result we would advise that this matter is kept under review both now and into the future to mitigate the risk of an unexpected tax bill arising. We would advise that this is considered across all boards going forward if this is not being taken into account already.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>
We are aware of the case and potential implications to employees of classification of vehicles. Generally, we do not make changes concerning additional passenger/load capabilities to that of the original manufacturer's specification, which are relied upon alongside the HMRC guidance when designating vehicles for taxation/benefits in kind.

3. Provisions

We are pleased to note that, in the main; provisions for amounts owing to and owed from applicable boards, are being monitored and written back should the underlying potential asset/liability be extinguished. There are still odd cases where provisions are "brought forward and carried forward" that relate in excess of the standard life of debt, being 6 years. On review in some cases whilst the underlying rationale of these balances are reasonable, we would question whether payments could still be enforced if chased, aside from in relation to development contributions. As such we would encourage continued review of provisions as a whole, with special consideration being made to aged provisions that have existed for a number of years and ideally the rationale being documented in the accounts pack provided to us as part of the internal audit

We would also recommend that any such old debts or provisions (apart from development contribution provisions), say over 3 years old, be presented at the Board meeting annually and approved.

Client comment:

As part of the year end accounting procedures, provisions/balances are looked at on an individual basis and decisions made on relevance as to retain or to write back.

4. Budget figures

We note that Budget figures are prepared annually in advance, but we note these are not updated in the late Autumn even when notable variances may have occurred for various factors. Whilst not necessary to do so for all boards, we suggest that Chairmen of individual Boards are given opportunity to request updated Budgets after the half year point for the remainder of the year and distribute to Board members if they feel it appropriate due to circumstances to date or anticipated.

The budgets that have been set for 2022/23 year may need to be increased throughout the year due to the significant cost increases that are currently well publicised in the media, most notably in relation to the cost of gas and electricity as a result of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Client comment:

As part of the finance regulations, we are required to carry out a budget monitoring exercise during the course of the year. For those Boards that have a relevant meeting, this is reviewed by the Board at their autumn/winter meeting. For all other Boards the monitoring exercise is completed as at the end of the calendar year, at this point the majority of the drain maintenance works have been completed, as would be any planned maintenance works at pumping stations. The expenditure to-date is then forecast to the end of the financial year and compared to the budget and initially sent to the chairman for review. Depending on the outcome of the monitoring exercise depends on whether it is considered appropriate to hold an emergency meeting. However, it is likely that if there were an extraordinary event the Board would be aware "in real time" and appropriate action taken at that point. It is not policy to update budgets depending on levels of expenditure but to use these as comparative to analyse variances of actual expenditure against.

5. Surplus Funds

It is noted a number of IDB's hold significant cash reserves, with inflation now being at a 40 year high, all IDB's need to consider investing their surplus funds, in order to achieve greater return on public funds and to ensure value for money principles are observed and cash asset values are not eroded overtime. We appreciate that in recent years interest rates would have made such an exercise unfruitful when taking into account the associated admin cost involved in such an undertaking. However, with the Bank of England now increasing interest rates to combat rising inflation in the UK, we would advise that this is now an opportune time to conduct such an exercise.

Client comment:

We have previously made arrangements with our bankers concerning the costs for the provision of banking services and interest which when added together more than covered the costs associated with monthly/quarterly administration costs in transferring funds. As mentioned, interest rates in recent years have been negligible and as responsible public authorities we need to maintain caution as to where funds may be deposited - the general principle of the higher the reward the higher the risk applies. During this period we did re-negotiate our banking arrangements and maintained the cost benefit in relation to the provision of banking services. Although it is correct that the Bank of England is increasing interest rates to combat inflation, rates will not match/keep pace with (current) inflation and with the current spiralling fuel costs we also need to ensure Boards have sufficient liquidity to meet ongoing operational expenditure. We have planned meetings with our bankers when this will be discussed further as well as looking at possible alternative places for longer term investments.

6. Rental of Land

It was previously noted that some IDB's were renting out land to tenants for less than market value and that this should be reviewed to ensure value for money principles were being applied.

We are happy to note that some IDB's have increased the rental values of land to market rates, although there are still some IDB's where the rental value is significantly below market value and we advise that the market values are increased for these boards to ensure value for money principles are applied going forwards.

Client comment:

Boards which have land holding for rent generally review rents in accordance with tenancy agreements and use local land agents for guidance. A number of Boards have small holdings of land which are let at reasonable rates with a view to keep the land tidy and in good order as they are not necessarily commercially viable. A number of Boards have slamp land, which cannot be considered the same as general agricultural land for rental purposes. All Boards look to get the best rents available, but these are relevant to the size and type of land being let.

Specific Points

Conington & Holme IDB

We note that the pumping station owned by the board is insured at less than the latest revaluation amount, see below;

Insured value	610,000
Latest revaluation	685,630
Underinsured	**75,630**

We understand that the board took the conscious decision not to uplift the insurance value in line with the revaluation figure suggested by the engineer. As already highlighted above, should any significant event occur, such as a major fire, resulting in the need to reinstate the asset in full, the board run the risk of the shortfall which would require the use of surplus balances to cover the resulting deficit in funds. We would therefore strongly recommend that the board consider increasing the insured value to the revaluation figure.

Client comment:

Although as previously mentioned these points will be raised as agenda items your comments and recommendations will also be considered when reviewing the internal audit report.

Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Joint Pumping Arrangement

As in previous years it is noted that there is a discrepancy between debtor held in Waldersey IDB and the creditor held in Hundred of Wisbech IDB.

Waldersey IDB - Debtor	25,936.95
Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Creditor	25,500
Difference	**436.95**

We are pleased to note that this difference is insignificant for the current year. The difference arises due to the accounts of Hundred of Wisbech IDB being completed before Waldersey IDB, leading to a provision being required in the former's books in the absence of more accurate information being available. The difference is adjusted in the following year's Accounts for Hundred of Wisbech but in the short term could be considered slightly misleading.

We note that there have been discussions to potentially amalgamate the two boards, this would eradicate the anomaly. However, in the absence of this, we wonder whether there is scope to bring the meetings and account preparation periods in line to address this issue.

Client comment:

These costs relate to the contribution for the costs of the shared pumping facility and at the time of production of the year end accounting statements discussions were taking place concerning potential changes to the contribution as a result of changes in land use. A new proposal had been put forward which was broadly approved by both Boards.

There are no current plans to change meeting dates so as one set of accounts is finalised before the other there is likely to remain creditor/debtor position in both sets of accounts although now that all older balances have been cleared, any in-year balance should be cleared, generally a year in arrears.

March East IDB

During our review it was noted that the onsite pumping station attendant's payments were not authorised during the year, the amounts charged by the attendant are similar to the rental costs charged to the individual for occupying residential property owned by the district. We understand that this arrangement has been agreed at board level to ensure that the individual is not financially penalised in carrying out their duties for the board. However, this treatment appears to be at odds with the amount charged being disproportionate when compared to other IDB's that we have audited. We would advise that these amounts most certainly should be authorised to ensure adequate controls are maintained over the purchase function and we would also question how HMRC would interpret the arrangement should they carry out any follow up review in the future.

Client comment:

Following a review in the previous financial year residential property rent was re-assessed in-line with current guidance from HMRC. At the same time the value of the attendant's services was re-appraised. These reviews were approved by the Board. There were no changes proposed for 2022 so the original resolution remained unchanged. However, we agree with your comments and both areas will be considered annually as separate agenda items.

March Sixth DDC

During the course of our audit we noted that the 2021/22 public rights notice had not been published on the website, we are pleased to note that following notification of this fact the notice was promptly uploaded. We are satisfied that this is an isolated incident but would remind all boards of their obligation to comply with the requirements in this area and to ensure that all relevant documents are published in a timely manner.

Client comment:

Every effort is made to update the relevant pages of all authorities in an efficient and timely manner and in accordance with the regulations. It should be noted that as well as display on the website, notices are also displayed in paper format withing the District.

Your comment is noted and procedures will be amended concerning this for the future.

We take this opportunity to thank your staff involved in our audit for their assistance and cooperation in achieving substantial completion by the stated target deadlines. We trust that the engagement team have not caused significant disruption during the execution of their procedures.

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP

C.984 Appointment of Internal Auditor

Mr Hill reported that following the conclusion of tendering Whitings LLP have been appointed as internal auditor for a five-year period commencing 1st April 2023 (financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28), viz;

middle level
commissioners

Internal Audit Tender Proposal to

Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage Commissioners under the administration of the Middle Level Commissioners

November 2022

Whitings
Chartered Accountants LLP

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Executive Summary

Whitings LLP are a regional firm of Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers, based in 11 locations throughout East Anglia.

The firm has broad range of experience in dealing with internal and external audits, serving a range of local organisations operating with the private and public sector.

On review of your invitation to tender we understand that the following requirements need to be met:

- Subject the financial statements to internal audit in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Upon conclusion of the internal audit prepare of a management letter to the board detailing any deficiencies in the internal systems, recommending improvements in addition to communicating whether in our opinion the organisation are ensuring value for money is being achieved.
- Completion of the Internal Audit Report within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return

We have had the pleasure as serving as your internal auditors for several years and have demonstrated our ability to meet the statutory deadlines set. We will strive to deliver this whilst also providing the following benefits:

- Ensuring staff continuity from year to year
- Quoting and sticking to an agreed fee for the duration of the five year appointment
- Providing a comprehensive and personable service, building on the strong working relationships that we already have with your organisation
- Pro-active in our approach to the engagement, seeking out ways to streamline the internal audit process to ensure minimal disruption to your day-to-day operations

Our fees for the first year ended 31 March 2024, excluding VAT, will be £21,250 (exc. VAT) for the Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage Commissioners administered by the Middle Level Commissioners, a detailed breakdown of our fee structure for the five year appointment can be found on page 10 of this document.

Our clients rightly demand a service that provides high quality, specialist expertise, timeliness and cost effectiveness combined with local knowledge, an appreciation of local Fenland circumstances and district needs. Whitings LLP, having been established in the local area since 1928, have a proven track record of being able to meet these demands and continue to review and develop its business practices to ensure that this remains the case for many years to come.

Your Requirements

You have asked us to quote for providing the following services for the Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage Commissioners administered by the Middle Level Commissioners:

- Subject the financial statements to internal audit in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Upon conclusion of the internal audit prepare of a management letter to the board detailing any deficiencies in the internal systems, recommending improvements in addition to communicating whether in our opinion the organisation are ensuring value for money is being achieved.
- Completion of the Internal Audit Report within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return

In order to obtain best value from our service, it is essential that our audit work is directed towards areas of greatest risk. You have indicated that you will maintain the accounting records, presenting our firm with accurate completed financial statements together with relevant and supporting schedules and reconciliations as required in a timely fashion.

The first accounts to be internally audited shall be for the year ended 31 March 2024. We will be able to carry out our work on these in accordance with your completion timetable which we provisionally understand to be 30 June 2024.

Our Audit Approach

Before the boards' year end, we would anticipate a pre-planning meeting between the audit team and members of the Middle Level Commissioners' finance team. At this meeting various formalities such as the timing of our procedures will be agreed, together with the identification of key audit areas. We would also at this stage confirm our understanding of the company's accounting systems and structure of internal controls.

This enables us to adopt an efficient and structured approach to risk assessment, analytical appraisal of results and the tailoring of audit testing to ensure that your accounts comply with all relevant legislation and regulations. The below internal audit strategy has been designed to be a high level statement of how our audit approach will be delivered and developed during the proposed engagement period.

Internal audit is an independent, objective assurance and pro-active consulting services designed to add value and improve the Board's operations. It provides an independent and objective opinion to the Board on the control environment that comprises risk management, control and governance.

All internal audit work will be undertaken with due regard to the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations having cognition of the Practitioners Guide.

It covers aspects of all financial systems annually, rather than just on a strict 3 year cyclical basis which is a fairly common alternative for Internal Audit functions. The plan is for minimal 'systems review' days as the financial systems are undertaken on a common basis due to the administration of the boards by the Middle Level Commissioners, so using a risk based audit approach these only require to be audited on a sample basis across the IDBs on an annual basis. The normal level of both System confirmation and Transaction testing is set to ensure that some transactions of all individual boards within the Middle Level Commissioners' administered area are covered each year such as will be appropriate to the Board's level of activity and/or strength of assessed internal controls; nonetheless all Boards will be covered in all areas across a 3 year period.

Even so, where issues are identified , major internal control systems/personnel changes occur , or problems are encountered in conduct or results of the internal audit then the scheduled rota may be amended on year by year basis.

In addition, substantial work is carried each year on every Board on certain areas to ensure compliance and correctness of the Annual Return form.

The following list summarises the main work done and frequency, taking into account the objectives set out in the Annual Internal Audit Report within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return:

A -Return, Accounts & Completion (Annually)

- Ensure IDB/DDC cashbook kept up to date
- Ensure that monthly bank reconciliations are carried out
- Check that verification of bank reconciliations has been carried out
- Ensure that the annual return and accounting record opening and comparative figures agree to prior years records
- Ensure that figures stated on the annual return agree to underlying accounting records
- Checking casting and arithmetic of schedules
- Review variance report and investigate reasons excessive variances
- Ensure that the IDB/DDC publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit
- Ensure that the IDB/DDC has complied with the publication requirements as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

B - Purchases (Cyclically)

- Ensure that the IDB/DDC has complied with its financial regulations and these are reviewed with sufficient regularity by the board
- Check proper purchase authority is recorded by the board in relation to IDB/DDC payments
- Carry out walkthrough testing in relation to IDB/DDC purchase system
- Agreement of purchase ledger balances to trial balance
- Ensuring payment of principal and interest in respect of loans is in accordance with agreed terms
- Confirm list of payments issued agrees to minutes
- Ensure that individual purchases are authorised by a relevant person

C - Minutes, Value for Money, Risk Management, Ethical Standard and Sustainability (Annually)

Minutes

- Review of minutes to check that risks relating to the boards are discussed
- Ensure that a formal risk assessment is carried out by the board
- Review the budget setting process
- Review minutes for unusual or extraordinary activities
- Check insurance review

Value for Money

- Ensure that value for money principles are being observed
- Obtain relevant tenders for capital purchases to ensure VFM principles are being considered.

Risk Management

- Ensure that the boards risk register is kept up to date and adequately covers potential areas of risk facing the board.
- Ensure that risk factors are taken into account in the board's decision making and implementation processes

Ethical Standards and Sustainability

- Ensure that decisions are made in an ethical manner by the board, bearing in mind environmental and other socioeconomic circumstances/responsibilities within the local community.
- Ensure that ethics is taken into account within the boards defined policies
- Ensure that long term sustainability is being taken into account in operational decisions.

D - Budget and Variance Analysis (Cyclically)

- Review variance analysis issued by the board
- Check that progress against budgets are regularly monitored
- Check that budgets are used for determining rates for the following year
- Review accruals for reasonableness and completeness

E - Sales (Cyclically)

- Perform walkthrough testing on the IDB/DDC rates system, including the treatment of special levies
- Review any rates write offs and ensure received board approval
- Perform walkthrough testing of other sales made by IDB/DDCs
- Review minutes to ensure all expected other income has been received and banked

F - Petty Cash (Cyclically)

- Not applicable at present, no petty cash function for any IDB/DDCs currently administered.

G - Wages (Cyclically)

- Performance of wages walkthrough
- Ensure that authorisation granted for overtime paid
- Review of P11Ds (where applicable)
- Ensure that non-pay rolled staff have been correctly taxed
- Confirm contractor expenses to invoices and that pay rates and payments are authorised within the minutes by the board

H - Assets (Cyclically)

- Vouch additions and review sales of fixed assets in the year
- Ensure assets are adequately covered by IDB/DDC insurance policies
- Ensure that asset movements in the year are reasonable and consistent with prior years
- Review fixed assets for indicators or impairment, both through physical review and by reference to the minutes

I - Bank (Annually)

- Ensure that regular reconciliations have occurred in the year and that these are reviewed by a senior individual within the finance department
- Recalculation of interim and year end bank reconciliations, ensuring clearance of any outstanding payments or lodgements following the reconciliation date
- Ensure that cashbook entries are based on transactions as made rather than in order of appearance on the bank statements
- Consideration of treasury management, including returns where significant bank balances are held by IDB/DDCs

J - Trial Balance & Nominal (Cyclically)

- Ensure Opera trial balance transferred to the accounts correctly
- Scrutinise creditors, accruals, debtors and prepayments
- Identify any transactions that are held within the audited figures that relate to prior or future periods
- Review and scrutiny of adjustment journals posting during the year and as part of the year end accounts process

All financial systems are to be documented and reviewed on an annual basis to provide the required level of assurance. Where appropriate probity audit work will be undertaken and the propriety, accuracy and recording of transactions sample tested.

In addition to the main work carried out on each board, the below areas are also considered to be valuable components in delivering a high quality and well-rounded internal audit service.

Consultancy and Advice

Internal Audit will be available to assist the Board with control or operational issues. During the year there might be emerging risks or issues that need an independent view or review. In addition, internal audit will be pro-active with suggestions and advice to management from information gained through experience, other organisations and networking groups.

Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption

Internal Audit will be pro-active in counter fraud work. Although it is not a function of Internal Audit to detect fraud, bribery and corruption (this is a responsibility of management and good system control) work will be undertaken to help ensure there are adequate systems and procedures to highlight potential instances.

Value for Money (VFM), Risk Management, Ethical Standards and Sustainability

As a part of the internal audit review, systems and controls established by management to secure VFM, risk management, ethical standards and sustainability will be examined and evaluated. Matters of an overall nature are also addressed within the annual work programme. Auditors may initiate, conduct or participate additionally in special reviews in these areas where need arises.

The above covers Boards administered throughout the year by MLC but where a new Board is added to the group administration facility, a special additional / fuller review will occur in the first year of involvement.

At the completion of each audit a report will be produced and released to the Middle Level Commissioners for distribution to the Boards. This report details the terms of reference and scope of the audit, findings, recommendations and a management action plan. An executive summary that includes an audit opinion on controls will also be included.

An annual internal audit report shall be produced to the Board to provide an overall opinion on controls and detail the audit work for the year.

About Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP are a regional firm of Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers. At the time of writing, the firm has 12 partners and 7 associates who are supported by approximately 165 staff. The firm operates from 11 offices within the East Anglia counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. We are registered by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales to undertake audit work.

Due to the size of the firm we are able to offer our clients with a comprehensive range of services whilst also providing specific insights into industry sectors which represent the key sectors that our client base operates within, these are detailed below:

Service Offerings

- Audit and Assurance
- Business Support
- Business Tax
- General Practice
- IT Services
- Payroll
- Private Client Tax
- Probate and Estate Administration
- Start Ups
- Tax Enquiry and Investigation Service
- Wealth Management

Sector Specialisms

- Agriculture and related industries
- Construction
- Contractors
- Creative Industries
- Manufacturing
- Not for Profit
- Property
- Retail
- Road Haulage
- Technology

More comprehensive information on the firm, its services, specialisms and culture can be found on the website www.whitingsllp.co.uk

Our Fees

We believe the fee scales we propose for this assignment are competitive and reflective of the work required to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations. We do not compromise on quality by issuing tenders for audit assignments that are clearly uneconomic.

Our fees for the year ended 31 March 2024 will be £21,250 (exc. VAT) for the Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage Commissioners administered by the Middle Level Commissioners.

With regard to fees for future years, we would expect, on the assumption that the level of activities and quality of accounting records do not alter significantly that our fees would rise by no more than in line with our wage rate inflation, assumed to be 5% per annum. If, through efficiencies that we can introduce, we can provide the same services at a lower guide fee, then we shall pass on this discount to you.

On this premise, we quote the following four years' fees, excluding VAT, as: -

2024-25	£22,300
2025-26	£23,400
2026-27	£24,600
2027-28	£25,800

For normal ongoing continuous supply services, the initial payment request issued will not be a tax invoice for VAT purposes but will include a notional amount for VAT. On receipt of your payment a tax invoice will be issued to enable you to recover input tax where applicable. However, please note that a VAT invoice will be issued in certain rare circumstances for exceptional "non-continuous" work only.

You will be billed at appropriate intervals during the course of the year. We would expect most of the fees to be billed in a single fee note raised soon after the completion of the Internal Audit Report and issue of our management letter to the board. We would also propose to raise fee notes for any further specially agreed work on a quarterly basis. Payment of fees will be due within 30 days of the date of the payment request.

Key Personnel and Career Summaries

Our philosophy is to provide each client with a dedicated team responsible for their affairs, thus ensuring that we can provide both expertise and continuity of service.

All our audit staff are either qualified or studying for professional qualifications in either AAT, ACCA, or ACA. Our partners, associates and staff undertake a vigorous ongoing programme of continuing professional development, to maintain high technical standards.

Over many years we have experienced extremely high levels of staff retention, enabling us to staff audits with the same individual's year on year. This allows us to accumulate high levels of background understanding of your organisation and these mature relationships with clients makes two way communication both easy and friendly.

The proposed core audit team will be:

Your Audit Principle
It is intended that the audit principle responsible for this assignment will be Ben Beech, an Associate of the firm who is based at our March office. Ben began working for Whitings in 2011, qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in 2016. He is in charge of the firm's audit and assurance offering within the Fenland and surrounding areas, dealing with many of the firm's larger clients operating in a range of sectors. He is also involved in the monitoring and development of the firm's professional standards and compliance procedures.

Your Relationship Manager
Your designated relationship manager for this assignment will be Aston Hinson who is also based at our March office. Aston has worked with Ben for many years supporting him in the provision of high quality audits to some of the firm's largest clients. Aston is also part of the firms Not for Profit team, assisting these organisations with their accounting and tax requirements.

Your Audit Team
The audit team will include a range of staff appropriate to the varying tasks involved ranging from qualified accountants to junior accounts technicians.

Appendix A - Internal Audit Plan - Year Ending 31 March 2024

The below is an indication of the number of working days required to carry out the internal audit of the 29 Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage Commissioners under the administration of the Middle Level Commissioners. As a result, and taking into account the engagement timeframe, we are confident that we will be able to meet the deadlines set.

Audit Areas	Planned Days
Planning - discussions, clarification, summarising, AGAR requirement review	4
Systems - review and confirmation work	20
Transactions - testing and verification	20
Completion - collation of issues and recommendations, enquiries of management, reporting via the AGAR and management letter	6
TOTAL	**50**

Appendix B - List of Administered Boards

Benwick Internal Drainage Board
Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board
Churchfield and Plawfield Internal Drainage Board
Conington and Holme Internal Drainage Board
Curf and Wimblington Combined Internal Drainage Board
Euximoor Internal Drainage Board
Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners
Hundred Foot Washes Internal Drainage Board
Hundred of Wisbech Internal Drainage Board
Manea and Welney District Drainage Commissioners
March West and White Fen Internal Drainage Board
March East Internal Drainage Board
March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners
March Sixth District Drainage Commissioners
March Third District Drainage Commissioners
Needham and Laddus Internal Drainage Board
Nightlayers Internal Drainage Board
Nordelph Internal Drainage Board
Over and Willingham IDB
Ramsey First (Hollow) Internal Drainage Board
Ramsey Fourth (Middlemoor) Internal Drainage Board
Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board
Ransonmoor District Drainage Commissioners
Sawtry Internal Drainage Board
Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board
Swavesey Internal Drainage Board
Upwell Internal Drainage Board
Waldersey Internal Drainage Board
Warboys, Somersham and Pidley Internal Drainage Board

RESOLVED

i) That the Commissioners approved the appointment of Whitings LLP

ii) That the Commissioners approved the audit Strategy.

C.985 Defra IDB1 Returns

Mr Hill referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2021/2022 which the Commissioners noted and approved, viz;

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Annual Report for the year ended
31 March 2022

The Law – the following annual report is provided in accordance with Paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to the Land Drainage Act 1991.

No later than 31 October 2022 a copy must be provided to:

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Division, Floor 3, Seacole, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF via flood.reports@defra.gov.uk
- National Flood and Coastal Risk Manager (Strategic Delivery), The Environment Agency, Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5AH via james.addicott@environment-agency.gov.uk
- The Chief Executives of:
  - all local authorities that pay special levies to the Board;
  - all County Councils or London Boroughs within which the Board is situated.

Please complete the form electronically. If you are unable to complete the form electronically, please complete in BLOCK LETTERS using **black ink**.

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Section A – Financial information

Preliminary information on special levies issued by the Board for 2022-23

Information requested below is essential in calculating future formula spending share. It is not covered elsewhere on this form or by the external auditor's certificate.

Special levies information for financial year 2022-23 (forecast)	
Name of local authority	**2022-23 forecast £**
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	36,146
2. KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL	21,372
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**57,518**

Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2022

All Internal Drainage Boards must ensure that the Income and Expenditure information provided below is consistent with the Board's annual accounting statements which have been prepared in accordance with proper practices found in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – A Practitioners' Guide to proper practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements March 2017*

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2022 £
INCOME		
1. Drainage Rates		140,309
2. Special Levies		54,254
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		808
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		2,440
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		0
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		0
7. Loans		0
8. Rechargeable Works		0
9. Interest and Investment Income		36
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		0
11. Other Income		100
Total income		**197,947**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		0
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		75,297
14. Watercourse maintenance		73,557
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		55,668
16. Administration		16,937
17. PSCAs		0
18. Rechargeable Works		0
19. Finance Charges		0
20. SSSIs		0
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		1,068
22. Other Expenditure		269
Total expenditure		**222,796**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		0
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**(24,849)**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		53,172
25. Grant income not applied in year		7,445

Notes:

11. Include all other Income, such as absorption account surpluses (for example plant and labour absorption accounts).

12. State the gross cost of undertaking minor capital works that have not been capitalised and the annual depreciation charges of all major schemes that have been capitalised. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the schemes.

13. State the total precept demanded for the year as properly issued by the Environment Agency, in accordance with section 141 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Providing that the precept has been properly issued as before stated it should always be included here, even when the Board has appealed against the amount of contribution, in accordance with section 140 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Where the Board knows with certainty the outcome of any such appeal, it should also include the appropriate accrual/prepayment.

14. State all costs associated with the maintenance of watercourses, meaning work associated with open channels, pipelines, culverts, bridges, etc. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the maintenance programme.

15. State all costs associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures.

16. Include the cost of non-technical staff only, office accommodation, annual depreciation of office equipment that has been capitalised, minor office equipment that has not been capitalised, postages, telecoms', stationery, printing, advertising, auditing of accounts, general insurances and all other costs associated with supporting the organisation. Please note that this does not include support costs, which are directly associated with the delivery of front line services.

17. State all costs associated with the PSCA

18. State all costs associated with undertaking work for third parties. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with undertaking the rechargeable work.

19. Include the cost of servicing any borrowing, in terms of bank/loan/hire purchase Interest payable.

20. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – specifically for helping to achieve favourable condition on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In most cases, these costs will be incurred in implementing actions set out in SSSI Water Level Management Plans or SSSI River Restoration Plans.

21. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – that are likely intended to help conserve biodiversity (other than works on SSSIs). These costs are likely to be incurred in implementing actions set out in an IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan or other conservation actions on non-designated sites.

22. Include all other expenditure, such as a provision for bad/doubtful debts, write-offs, and absorption account deficits (for example plant and labour absorption accounts).

23. For the disposal of assets, state the difference between any proceeds from the sale/disposal of the asset and the cost of the asset less accumulated depreciation.

24. Total balance of developer fund year end.

25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

Boards are required to produce a publicly available policy statement setting out their plans for delivering the Government's policy aims and objectives. It is recommended that these statements be published on Boards' websites where they have them and reviewed every three years.

Is an up to date statement in place and copy (or weblink) provided to Defra, and EA?...Yes ☒ No ☐

Biodiversity

Please indicate whether your Board has a Biodiversity Action Plan ....Yes ☒ No ☐

If "yes" is the Biodiversity Action Plan available on your website?...Yes ☒ No ☐

What year was your Biodiversity Action Plan last updated?)............................ 2021

Have you reported progress on BAP implementation on your web site?..................................Yes ☒ No ☐

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?.............................. 25/06/2021

Do you have a biosecurity process?...Yes ☒ No ☐

SSSI water level management plans

Please indicate whether your Board is responsible for any SSSI water level management plans?................ ....Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, which ones:

Area of SSSI with IDB water level management plans............................

Area of SSSI where IDB water level management activities are contributing to recovering or favourable condition?

Area of SSSI where IDB water level management actions are required to achieve recovering or favourable condition?

Access to environmental expertise

Does your IDB have access to environmental expertise? If so please tick all those options below through which environmental expertise is regularly provided to your IDB:

- Appropriately skilled Board Members (e.g. Board member from an Environmental Body/Authority) ☐
- Co-opted members ☐
- Directly employed staff ☒
- Contracted persons or consultants ☐
- Environmental Partners/NGOs ☐
- Other (please describe) ☐

Asset Management

What system/database does your Board use to manage the assets it is responsible for?

- ADIS ☐
- Paper Records ☒
- Other Electronic System ☒

Has your Board continued to undertake visual inspections and update asset databases on an annual basis? Yes ☒ No ☐

What is the cumulative total of identified watercourse (in km) that the Board periodically maintains?

32.5

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

2

What is the cumulative design capacity of the Board's pumping station(s) (enter zero if no stations are operated)?

5.12 cumecs

Health and Safety

Does the Board have a current Health and Safety policy in place? Yes ☒ No ☐

Does the Board have a responsible officer for Health and Safety? Yes ☒ No ☐

Have there been any reportable incidents in the past year? Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please summarise in the box below:

Guidance and Best Practice

Has your IDB adopted a formal Scheme of Delegation? Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your IDB provided training for board members in the last year in the any of the following areas?

- Governance ☒
- Finance ☐
- Environment ☒
- Health, safety and welfare ☐
- Communications and engagement ☐
- Other (please describe) ☐

Is your Board's website information current for this financial year? (Board membership, audited accounts, programmes of works, WLMPS, etc)........Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your IDB adopted computerised accounting and rating systems?........Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your board published all minutes of meetings on the website?........Yes ☒ No ☐

Does the Board publish information on its website on its approach to maintenance works and provide contact details to allow for and encourage public engagement? Yes ☒ No ☐

When planning maintenance and capital works are environmental impacts taken into account and wherever possible best practice applied? Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your Board adopted the following governance documents?

Standing Orders........Yes ☒ No ☐

Have the Standing Orders been approved by Ministers........Yes ☒ No ☐

Byelaws........Yes ☒ No ☐

If you have Byelaws, have you adopted the latest model byelaws published in 2012........Yes ☒ No ☐

Have the Byelaws been approved by Ministers........Yes ☒ No ☐

Code of Conduct for Board Members........Yes ☒ No ☐

Financial Regulations...Yes ☒ No ☐
Register of Member's Interests...Yes ☒ No ☐
Anti-fraud and corruption policy...Yes ☒ No ☐

Board membership and attendance

How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	16
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	5
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	13
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	3
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	10
Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	2

Have you held elections within the last three years?.......................................Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒
Did elections comply with the requirements specified by the Secretary of State under Regulation 28 of the Land Drainage (Election of Drainage Boards) Regulations 1938?......................... Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Complaints procedure

Is the procedure for a member of the public to make a complaint about the IDB accessible from the front page of its website?...Yes ☒ No ☐

Number of complaints received in the financial year?	0
Number of complaints outstanding in the financial year?	0
Number of complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman?	0
Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman?	0

Public Engagement

Set out what your Board has done in this financial year to engage with the public (tick relevant box(es) below):

Press releases ☐
Newsletters ☐
Web site ☒
Meetings ☒
Shows/events (including open days/inspections) ☐
Consultations ☐
Notices ☒

Percentage (in value) of drainage rates outstanding at year end?

0.63%

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

Has your Board published **all** minutes of meetings on the web site? In answering this question, this should apply to all the main Board meetings held in the year and any appropriate meetings the Board has held with external stakeholders.

Board membership and attendance

When referring to **elected members** of the Board, this relates to the number of landowners/drainage rate payers that are elected to the Board.

When referring to **appointed members** of the Board, this relates to the number of members appointed by the local authorities to represent the local council taxpayers.

When referring to mean average number of elected and appointed members in attendance at meetings at each board meeting – **this should be expressed as a number of attendees** and not as a percentage attendance.

With regard to elections, under Schedule 1 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, elected members should hold office for three years, at which point a further election is held. When elections are held, they should comply with the requirements under Regulation 28 of the Land Drainage (Election of Drainage Boards) Regulations 1938 – to advertise and notify local stakeholders accordingly.

Section C – Declaration

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

I confirm that the information provided in sections A-C or with this form is correct.

Signature	S Ablett
Date	12/09/2022
Name in BLOCK LETTERS	MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT
Designation	ASSISTANT TREASURER
Email address	sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

C.986 Review of Internal Controls

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

C.987 Risk Management Assessment

a) The Commissioners considered and expressed satisfaction with their current Risk Management Policy.

b) The Commissioners considered and approved the insured value of their building and to index-link the insured values annually, viz;

MANEA & WELNEY DDC
INSURED VALUE OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS

	As At 31st March 2023
PURLS BRIDGE PUMPING STATION	735,000.00
GLEN HOUSE PUMPING STATION	1,530,000.00
OLD GLENHOUSE PUMPING STATION	300,000.00
WELCHES DAM	5,000.00
	2,570,000.00

C.988 Exercise of Public Rights

Mr Hill 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.989 Payments to 31st December 2022

The Commissioners considered and approved payments amounting to £154,725.49 which had been made during the period from the 1st April to the 31st December 2022, viz;

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Payments 2021/2022 (1st April 2021 - 31st December 2021)

Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Health and Safety contract	8,956.44
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,166.10
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaner (Glenhouse Pumping Station)	1,817.17
Middle Level Commissioners - Pump repairs (Purls Bridge Pumping Station)	804.15
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,041.62
Ratatak - Pest control (April - June 2021)	84.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.00
Wave - Metered water supply	11.72
Environment Agency - Precept	37,648.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Preparation of highland water claims	18.89
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Ben Burgess Coates - 750 hour service of John Deere Tractor - AO20 NWL	940.78
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	282.07
Mastenbroek Environmental Ltd - Seal kit	26.17
Ratatak - Pest control (July - September 2021)	84.00
Wave - Metered water supply	11.91
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of mink rafts, traps and remoti units (Account from Norfolk Rivers)	600.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.25
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery	7,470.08
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	3,311.67
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	526.50
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2020-2021 accounts)	960.00
FJS Services Ltd - 3 Hex bolts	7.20
AJS Farming - Rates refund	248.68
Environment Agency - Precept	37,648.50
Ratatak - Pest control (October - December 2021)	84.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Wave - Metered water supply	12.04
Mastenbroek Environmental Ltd - 1.3 metres of rubber strip	82.42
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	282.07
FJS Services Ltd - 28 repair washers and a 10mm fuel hose	7.65
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.39
Fen Group - Drain Maintenance	7,567.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2020-2021 accounts)	927.00
Cambridgeshire County Council - Annual rent (Right of access)	100.00
FenFlow Ltd - Overhaul of automatic weedscreen cleaner (Glen House pumping station)	28,740.79
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply (Glenhouse pumping station)	607.53
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply (Purls Bridge pumping station)	1,890.31
Anglia Farmers - Diesel	310.79
Anglia Farmers - Gas oil	8,012.02
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges	344.65
Anglia farmers - Spares for repairs	285.14
District labour	20,860.22
NEST Pension Contributions	1,961.15
	175,840.12

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Payments 2022/2023 (1st April 2022 - 31st December 2022)

Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, discussion regarding Glen House pumping station works, planning and development applications)	1,240.28
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	282.07
Paynes of Chatteris Ltd - Repairs to 2 cables to submersible pump	157.20
Ratatak - Pest control (April - June 2022)	88.20
Bank charges	3.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	12.15
Wave - Metered water supply	11.79
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	408.00
C.J. Mason - Repairs to AU15 XHB	84.27
Environment Agency - Precept	38,401.47
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Ben Burgess Coates - 1500 hour service of John Deere Tractor - AO20 NWL	1,708.27
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	181.06
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Ben Burgess Coates - Supply of fenders, fender pivot, grille, bolts an screws	1,435.82
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Ratatak - Pest control (July - September 2022)	88.20
Wave - Metered water supply	12.03
N L Hydraulics - Hydraulic hose and cable ties	78.46
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.61
C.J. Mason - Repairs to AU15 XHB	269.16
Mr & Mrs P Hawthorne - Rates refund	25.82
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	2,835.30
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2021-2022 accounts)	480.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	262.87
Environment Agency - Precept	38,401.47
FJS Services Ltd - 2 Hex bolts, washers and nuts	7.78
N L Hydraulics - 20 litres of hydraulioc oil	63.60
Bank charges	3.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Mr P Jolley - Rates refunded	117.11
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	750.07
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2021-2022 accounts)	930.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	508.70
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges	7,430.88
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Environmental Officer)	467.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	754.98
Wave - Metered water supply	12.16
Ratatak - Pest control (October - December 2022)	90.40
Cambridgeshire County Council - Annual rent (Right of access)	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaner (Purls Bridge Pumping Station)	167.24
FenFlow Ltd - Overhaul of inlet valve and repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaner (Glen House pumping station)	2,488.02
Bank charges	3.00
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges	13.06
Fen Group - Drain maintenance	15,027.60
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Glenhouse pumping station)	1,170.25
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Purls Bridge pumping station)	5,820.20
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (Purls Bridge pumping station)	209.70
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (Glenhouse pumping station)	133.49
Anglia Farmers - Electricity data collection charges - (Purls Bridge pumping station)	146.84
Anglia Farmers - Diesel	600.55
District labour	27,910.50
NEST Pension Contributions	3,240.00
	154,725.49

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

(NB) – The Chairman, M Heading and Cllrs Crofts and Sutton declared interests (as a Member of the Middle Level Board) in the payments made to the Middle Level Commissioners.

C.990 Expenditure estimates and special levy and drainage rate requirements 2023/2024

The Commissioners considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2023/2024 and were informed by Mr Hill 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 respectively be 71.73% and 28.27%, viz;

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
Rating Estimates 2023/2024

	Approved Estimates 2022/2023	**Probable Actual 2022/2023**	**Estimated 2023/2024**	**Estimated 2024/2025**	**Estimated 2025/2026**
1 CHANNEL MAINTENANCE	13,500	17,500	18,500	18,500	19,000
2 LABOUR	38,000	41,000	43,500	45,500	47,000
3 REPAIRS AND RENEWALS	10,500	12,250	10,500	10,500	10,500
Pump overhaul	15,000	0	15,000	15,000	15,000
4 FUEL	27,500	27,500	33,000	33,000	33,000
5 RATES, INSURANCES & TELEPHONES	3,750	3,250	3,500	3,750	4,000
6 ADMINISTRATION	17,775	16,500	17,775	18,000	18,000
7 TECHNICAL SERVICES	3,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000
8 E. A. PRECEPT	77,297	76,803	79,150	81,500	83,150
9 PLANT REPLACEMENT	4,000	28,450	0	0	0
	210,322	**225,753**	**223,925**	**228,750**	**232,650**
INCOME	**4,887**	**19,512**	**835**	1,000	1,000
Net Expenditure 205,435	**205,435**	**206,241**	**223,090**	**227,750**	**231,650**
Rate Requirement	**0.4325**		**0.47000**	**0.4773**	**0.4855**
Increase on previous year budget			**8.67%**	**1.56%**	**1.71%**

AV 477,147

Gen. Fund balance open		244,910	244,246	
Rates raised	*Rate set - 41.00*	205,577	223,090	0.4700 p
net expenditure		206,241	223,090	
closing balance		**244,246**	**244,246**	

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Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners

Rate and levy requirements

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2023/2024 is:-

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 71.73%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to:-

Fenland District Council -	17.91%	
Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk –	10.36%	28.27%

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £3,417.

In 2023/2024 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £4,753.

Estimated revenue cash balance in hand at 31st March 2023 - £244,000

The estimated net expenditure for the Commissioners Revenue and Capital Programmes in 2023/2024 is £223,090 and equivalent to:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 47.00p and

b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £39,281
a Special levy on Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk of £23,225

In 2022/2023 a rate of 43.25 in the £ was set, together with Special levies of £36,146 on Fenland District Council and £21,372 on Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk to raise £205,435.

The Commissioners should give consideration to the future level of balances required when setting the rate for 2023/2024.

D C THOMAS

Clerk to the Commissioners

January 2023

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners approve the recommendations of the Finance Committee;

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £224,128 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 £160,743 and £63,385 respectively.

iv) That a rate of 47.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) a) That a Special levy of £40,160 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.

b) That a Special levy of £23,225 be made and issued to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.

vi) That the seal of the Commissioners be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levies referred to in resolution (v).

vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levies by such statutory powers as may be available.

C.991 Date of Next Meeting

That the next meeting of the Commissioners and inspection of the District be held on Thursday 8th June 2023 10.15am at The Lamb & Flag Public House, Welney.

…………………………………………..
Chairman

…………………………..
Date