SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board held at Chatteris Cricket Club on Thursday 12th January 2023

PRESENT

M R R Latta Esq (Chairman)	M Heading Esq
C P K Lee Esq (Vice-Chairman)	M Jackson Esq
A Allan Esq	R Lee Esq
P Allpress Esq	R H Smith Esq
R J Angood Esq	J Sole Esq
Cllr S Criswell	P Sole Esq
T Edgley Esq	E Veal Esq

Mr R Hill (representing the Clerk to the Board) & Mr D Bantoft (Consulting Engineer) were in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received W Veal.

B.2296 Declarations of Interest

Mr Hill reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in the Agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

B.2297 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 28th June 2022 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2298 Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

B.2299 Election of Board Members

Mr Hill reported that the term of office of the Members of the Board will expire on the 31st October 2023 and the proposed register of electors which is applicable to the 2023 election was approved.

B.2300 Goodjohn's Farm

Further to minute B.2248, the Chairman confirmed that the water control structure had now been installed and was operating satisfactorily.

B.2301 Potential Amalgamation Discussions – Sutton & Mepal IDB, Manea & Welney DDC and Upwell IDB

Further to minute B.2269, Mr Hill advised that there had been no further development concerning this matter from the other drainage boards.

Concerning the retirement of the Boards District Officer, the Chairman reported that the Board had previously agreed to replace him and there was, therefore, little opportunity for shared working with other Boards at this time.

RESOLVED

That this matter be kept under review and be discussed at the next Board meeting.

B.2302 Ouse Washes Section 10 Reservoir Middle Level and South Level Barrier Bank works

Further to minute B.2271, Mr Hill referred to the Newsletter from the Environment Agency dated December 2022, 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.

Floodline 0345 988 1188 Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60

Environment Agency

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

Mr Hill further updated members, referring to the recent newsletter received, which highlighted remedial works to repair cracks in the embankment identified between Welney and the A142 Mepal, viz;

Environment Agency

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.

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

B.2303 Meter Readings – Lafarge and Tarmac

Further to minute B.2273, Mr Hill reported that following the last meeting, the clerk had asked the Assistant Treasurer to review and update on this matter. As had previously been identified, meter readings had been received and, as there had been changes of ownership of sites, these had been passed to the Middle Level Solicitor for action concerning new contract arrangements.

The Assistant Treasurer had taken the opportunity to update the calculations concerning discharge unit rate, and this information had also been forwarded to the Middle Level Solicitor. It had been agreed that, in the absence of agreements, that the Middle Level Solicitor would arrange a meeting with current site owners to fully review and agree new arrangements.

The Assistant Treasurer and the Boards District Officer had agreed to attend the meeting to get this matter resolved. Mr Hill reported that he was unable to find any evidence of any further contact/discussions with the site owners/operators.

Members expressed dissatisfaction with the constant delays in dealing with this matter. The Chairman asked that this matter be resolved as a matter of urgency as he was embarrassed at having to continually report that this matter remained outstanding.

He estimated that there could be in excess of £10,000 due to the Board concerning these un-billed discharges.

RESOLVED

That the Middle Level Solicitor be requested that this matter be dealt with as a matter of urgency and that the Chairman be updated on the latest position.

B.2304 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.

Mr Hill updated on the retirement of David Thomas and the arrangements put in place and that as the Board currently appoint Middle Level Commissioners as Clerk, Mr Burrows would become the Clerk to the Board. Mr Heading commented that both were high quality candidates and they would be starting employment with the commissioners on Monday 16th January 2023.

Members noted the position.

An update was given on the roll 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) Applications for byelaw consent

That the following applications for consent to undertake works in and around watercourses have been approved and granted since the last general meeting of the Board:-

Name of Applicant	Description of Works	Date Consent Granted
Mr D M Newman	Fill Board's district watercourse downstream of Point C 7 and an adjacent private watercourse outfall will be near to Point C6	16/11/2022

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.

2023 Annual Conference – date to be confirmed.

b) <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 challenges 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 B.2274(iv), Mr Hill reported that fees were omitted from the last meeting agenda and 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.

RESOLVED

- That the payment of £125 be approved for 2022/2023.
- That the payment of £125 be approved for 2023/2024.

B.2305 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

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

Sutton & Mepal I.D.B.

Consulting Engineers Report – December 2022

Pumping Station

Other than matters previously reported or detailed below only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant appears to be mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

As requested in the Matters Arising following the last meeting it is confirmed that warning stickers have been installed adjacent to the weedscreen cleaner.

Pumps

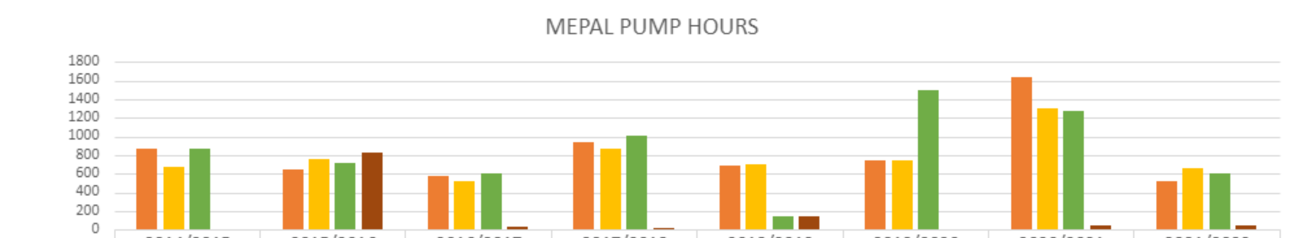
Pump 1 - failed in August 2022 so was removed for inspection and overhaul by Xylem (Flygt) and the spare pump was fitted. Overhaul cost would however have been 90% of replacement cost hence it was decided that a new pump should be ordered at a cost of £35,447. Due to current extended lead in times this replacement pump is not due to be delivered until week commencing 20th February 2023.

Pump 2 - insulation resistance had fallen considerably during this summer to a level which was a cause for concern. It has been set to duty since October 2022 and the reading has improved considerably from 2M Ohm to 110 M Ohm, this will continue to be monitored. It may indicate water ingress to the pump and consideration should be given to removing this pump for overhaul or replacement once the new pump is fitted.

Pump 3 insulation resistance figures are good.

Weedscreen Cleaner Running Hours 22/23 = 32 (1512)

Pumping hours



	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
PUMP 1	872	652	572	940	693	747	1644	517
PUMP 2	671	764	526	870	710	744	1310	659
PUMP 3	875	720	602	1009	141	1504	1271	611
PUMP 4	0	830	41	1	143	0	55	55

PUMP 1 PUMP 2 PUMP 3 PUMP 4

(note: pumping hours are a close estimate derived from available data to show comparable pumping hours for like periods)

Electricity Readings

Due to the volatility of the electricity market, regular and accurate manual electricity meter readings are 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 paid.

Moving forward it is requested that the Pump Attendants/District Officers take electricity meter readings 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 arrangement 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 during 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.

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*
363	H/22/00666/AGDET	Mr D Newman	Agricultural (Storage building)	Chatteris Road, Somersham
364	H/22/00541/FUL	AJM Residential	Residence	Somersham Road, Colne
365	F/YR22/0501/F	Mr J Doram	Residence	Iretons Way, Chatteris
366	H/22/01383/AGDET	Mr J Pomfret	Agricultural (Storage building)	Somersham Road, Colne

MLC Ref.	Council Ref.	Applicant	Type of Development	Location
367	F/YR22/0939/FDC	Fenland District Council	Residential (Up to 2 plots)	Wood Street, Chatteris
368	Enquiry	To be confirmed	Irrigation reservoir	Confidential - Details unknown*
369	CCC/22/099/DCON	A Sole & Sons	Irrigation reservoirs (2)	Langwood Fen Drove, Chatteris*
370	F/YR22/1197/F	The Active Learning Trust	Education (Temporary siting of portacabins for office use)	Wenny Road, Chatteris*

Planning applications ending 'AGDET' relate to Agricultural Determination
Planning applications ending 'DCON' relate to the discharge of relevant planning conditions

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).

No applications for Infiltration Device Self Certification or the Checking Service have been received since the last meeting report.

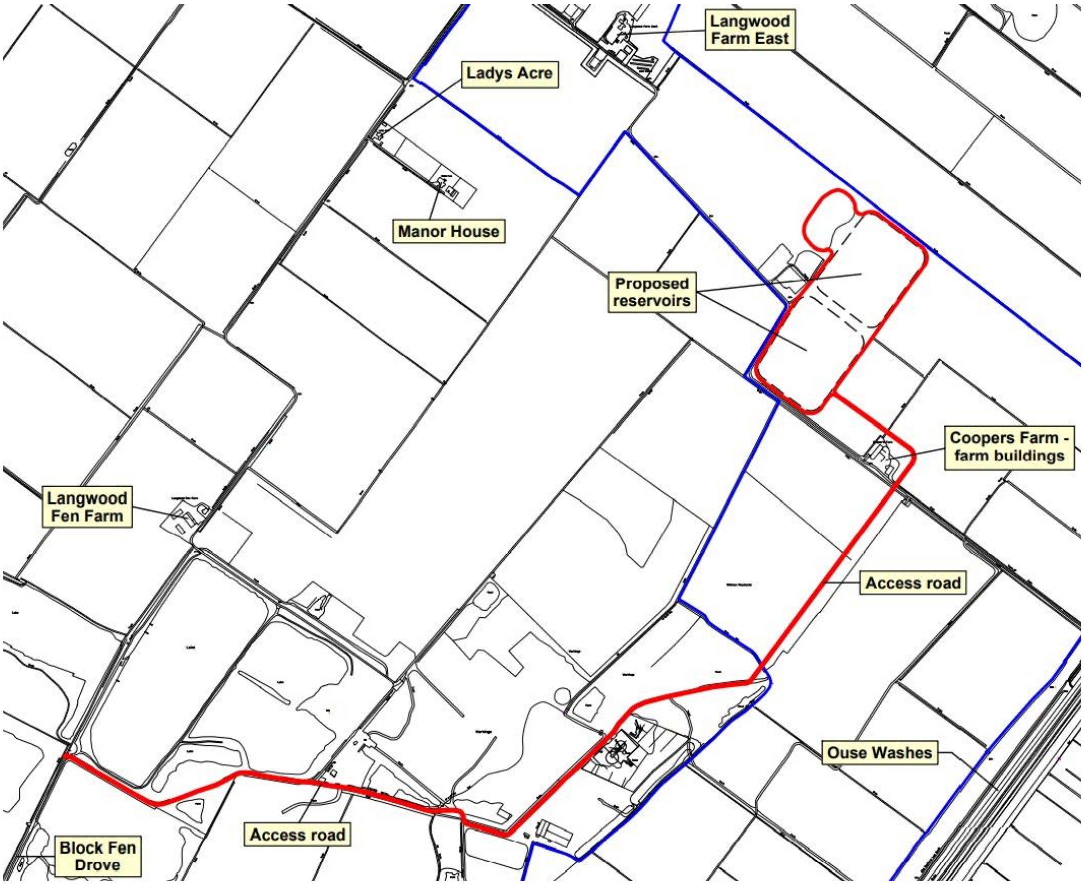
Members of the Board will recall that at the last meeting it was decided that specific detailed entries would not be made in future reports unless requested to do so. In the absence of any instruction no detailed entries have been made.

Current Planning Matters within the Master Plan area

Developments at Hundreds Farm, Langwood Fen Drove, Chatteris – A Sole & Son (MLC Ref No 091), *Mr P Sole* (MLC Ref No 319) *& A Sole & Sons Ltd* (MLC Ref No 354) and Coopers Farm – A Sole & Sons Ltd (MLC Ref 368)

Further to previous Meeting Reports, a discharge of conditions application has been submitted to the County Council, in its role as the Minerals & Waste planning authority, (Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) Ref CCC/22/099/DCON) for the creation of two irrigation reservoirs through the extraction and export of sand and gravel and the extraction of clay, followed by the infilling of a redundant irrigation reservoir with imported inert material. The application is for approval of details required by Conditions 5 (Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation); 6 (Construction Environmental Management Plan & Ecological Mitigation Strategy); 7 (Access road ditch crossing method statement); and 10 (Groundwater disposal scheme) of planning permission CCC/21/121/FUL.

A response was provided to the planning office outlining the requirement for the relevant discharge consent and byelaw consent in respect of the reservoir construction and access crossing. CCC planning office confirmed that as the application is in respect of discharge of conditions no further conditions would be applied. However, the response was forwarded to the applicant.



Extract from Mick George Ltd's Drawing No M4/1/21/01 Rev. A showing the site boundaries

Subsequent to the above, correspondence was received from the applicant, Mick George Ltd, and the relevant consent applications have been received. In correspondence with the Chairman and Vice Chairman no initial concerns with the proposals were identified, other than the potential for scour/erosion of watercourses at the discharge points. At the time of writing the consent application fee has not been paid. Following payment of the relevant fees the consent applications will be reviewed.

In addition to the relevant consents the applicant was advised that any dewatering volumes discharged to the Board's system would be recharged to recover the costs associated with the Board dealing with the increase in volumes. Details of this have been passed to the Clerk to draw up the relevant contract to recover costs.

Planning Updates & Consultations

A "Strategic Planning Consultation Responses" document can be found on www.middlelevel.gov.uk via the following link Strategic Planning Consultation.

General Advice

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

a) Mr D M Newman – An application has been received for byelaw consent to infill a length of Board's watercourse downstream of Point C7 and pipe and infill a length of private watercourse. Alternative drainage arrangements will be made utilising the existing adjacent lake. In wet periods should there be any overflow from the lake into the Board's drainage system then this will be metered and paid for. The application is recommended for approval with the addition of five clauses added to the consent document relating to the specific requirements identified by the Board.

Consulting Engineer

9 December 2022

S&M(350)\Reports\December 22

The Chairman introduced Mr Bantoft, who presented the report. He updated members on the age and current condition of the pumps and stated that, following the failure of pump no 1 in August 2022 and the report received from Xylem, the Chairman had authorised for an order to be placed for a new pump. The Chairman referred to the Boards policy to run the pumps until they fail and at that point either refurbish or replace.

Mr Bantoft referred to the difference between the current canister submersible pumps and the more robust suspended pumps, which although initially more expensive, generally proved to provide better value for money over their working life.

In response to the Chairman, Mr Bantoft estimated that the current pumping arrangements had been in place for around 30 years and that this current pump replacement would be the third, as well as other overhauls during this period.

The Chairman considered that the current pumps sets should have between 10 & 15 years working life left and the Board will need to consider a replacement policy towards the end of this period.

The Chairman considered that the lower pumping hours were a positive reflection on the works carried out to the Cranbrook Drain by the Environment Agency to reduce leakage.

In response to a query from Mr Angood concerning the conditions relating to the application by Mr Newman, the Chairman confirmed that they had been accepted and that the majority of the works had now been completed.
The Vice-Chairman reminded member that the conditions were detailed under minute B.2275 from the last meeting.

RESOLVED

i) That the report be approved
ii) That the Chairmans actions in ordering a new pump be approved

B.2306 Environmental Officer's Update

Mr Hill reported that Peter Beckenham had left the Commissioners in June 2022 and that while going through the process to fill the vacancy, Cliff Carson had carried out some work.

Sofi Lloyd, who had previously been employed in a Conservation role by ADA, had been appointed as Environment Officer and started work in October 2023.

B.2307 Claims for Highland Water Contributions – Section 57 Land Drainage Act 1991

The Clerk will report that claims for contributions totalling £1,437.35 (inclusive of supervision) have been submitted (£5,503.84 less £4,066.49 paid on account for the financial year 2021/2022 and the sum of £4,898.49 in respect of 80% of the Boards estimated expenditure for the financial year 2022/2023) and on communications from the Environment Agency concerning payment of the claims.

Mr Hill reported on the submitted claims and payments by the Environment Agency and in response to Mr Angood, briefly detailed the basis of the calculation used to calculate the contributions. He confirmed that the Boards contribution rate for the operation of the pumping station was 8%.

B.2308 Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions

The Clerk will report that ADA has increased subscriptions by 4.5% for 2023, from £721 to £755.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription for 2023 be paid.

B.2309 Health and Safety

Further to minute B.2286, The Vice-Chairman reported that matters were all in hand currently and he would update the Board further at the next meeting following the planned visit by Cope Safety Management on 17th January 2023.

B.2310 Risk Management Assessment

a) The Board considered and approved the Board's Risk Management Policy

b) The Board considered the insured value of the Board's buildings and considered index-linked insured values going forward, viz;

SUTTON & MEPAL IDB
INSURED VALUE OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS AND BUNGALOW

	As At 31st March 2022
Fortrey Hall Pumping Station Electric	1,300,000.00
Fortrey Hall Pumping Station Diesel	1,500,000.00
	2,800,000.00
Mepal Pumping Station Bungalow	180,000.00
	2,980,000.00

RESOLVED

That the Clerk check when the last valuation was carried out and be authorised to have properties valued, and when completed for these to be index-linked for insurance purposes and a valuation then carried out every 5 years.

B.2311 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2021/2022

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

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

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 Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board 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 Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board on application to:

The Clerk
Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board
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 Board

Date of Announcement: 26th September 2022

Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

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: 28/06/2022 08/03/2022 22/03/2022

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

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: [illegible] – WHITINGS LLP

Date: 22/03/2022

*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:

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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:

28/06/2022

and recorded as minute reference:

B.2290

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

Chairman

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2022 £	*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	720,190	700,582	*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	229,511	236,745	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	24,050	15,302	*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	36,183	35,684	*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	236,986	234,586	*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	700,582	682,359	*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	698,491	694,567	*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	3,202,164	3,202,164	*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 30th April 2022

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

28/06/2022

as recorded in minute reference:

B.2292

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

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of **SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD – DB0105**

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 14/09/2022

* 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 Board 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.

General points

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**

Client comment:

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.

Client comment:

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) Appointment of Internal Auditor

Mr Hill reported that, following a tendering process, Whitings LLP had been appointed as Internal Auditor from 5 years commencing 1st April 2023.

B.2312 Defra IDB1 Returns

Mr Hill referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2021/2022 which the Board 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 £.

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAIANGE BOARD

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	21,891
2. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	18,526
3. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	9,861
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**50,278**

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		191,546
2. Special Levies		45,199
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		6,298
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		300
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		8,570
9. Interest and Investment Income		34
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		0
11. Other Income		101
Total income		**252,048**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		0
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		113,104
14. Watercourse maintenance		88,362
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		74,387
16. Administration		19,248
17. PSCAs		0
18. Rechargeable Works		0
19. Finance Charges		0
20. SSSIs		0
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		673
22. Other Expenditure		269
Total expenditure		**296,043**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		0
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**(43,995)**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		285,598
25. Grant income not applied in year		0

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?)................................ 2022

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

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?.................................. 28/06/2022

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?

F:\Admim\Word\sutton+mepal\mins\12\01\23

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?

66.5

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

1

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

5.77 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?	17
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	4
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	16
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	1
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.	0

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?

0.43%

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

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

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

B.2313 Expenditure/ Estimate Update

The Board considered the Estimate Update for 2022/2023, viz;

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET MONITORING 2022/2023

		Approved budget 2022/2023 £	Actual to 30/11/2022 £	Forecast to 31/03/2022 £
1	Rates, telephones and insurances	6,000	5,570	6,000
2	Drainworks, repairs and renewals (including Environmental measures)	20,000 [A]	14,480 [B]	23,000 [C]
	Drainage channel - Cranbrook	0	0	0
3	Oil and electricity	59,000 [D]	17,543	61,000
4	District labour	39,000	26,009	39,000
5	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc	20,250 [E]	7,899 [E]	20,250 [E]
6	Environment Agency - Precept	115,366	115,366	115,366
7	Plant replacement	25,000 [F]	1,040	37,500 [G]
		284,616	187,908	302,116
	LESS :			
	Use of balances	0	0	0
	Revenue income	13,535	12,530	27,897 [H]
		271,081	175,378	274,219

Rates and Special Levy raised 2022/2023 - 43.00p £271,081

Remarks

A -	Includes for:	
	Maintenance/general	6,000
	Service/repairs to excavator	3,500
		9,500
B -	Includes for:	
	Maintenance/general	1,761
	Service/repairs to excavator	998
	Service/repairs to tractor/mower	3,023
		5,782
C -	Includes additional for excavator repairs	3,000
D -	Provision based on 5 year average plus 50% for new contract rates	
E -	Includes for new Health & Safety arrangements	
F -	Provision for plant replacement strategy	
G -	Replacement and fitting pump no.1	
H -	Includes asset replacement fund for balance of pump replacement	12,500

Mr Hill reported that the expenditure forecast had been reviewed with the Chairman and referred to increased repairs to the excavator. He commented on the current electricity costs and the further increase in unit rates from September and the Government cap as from October.

The Chairman commented on the age of the excavator and the ongoing maintenance/repairs for a machine of this age. He reminded members that the Board had previously decided to keep the excavator until the retirement of the District Officer.

Members queried the likely residual value in the current machine and delivery times for new machines. The Chairman considered it was more beneficial to have a machine on road wheels rather than a tracked machine and referred to the current arrangement with an extending dipper arm as apposed to a telescopic boom on newer machines.

RESOLVED

i) That the report is approved

ii) That the Chairman & Vice-Chairman authorised to obtain quotations to replace the Boards excavator and report at the next meeting.

B.2314 Date of Next Meeting

Mr Hill reminded Members that the next meeting of the Board will be held on Thursday 25th May 2023 at 10.30am prior to which the District Inspection will be held at 8.30am.

B.2315 Any Other Business

i) Pingles Pit

The Chairman referred to discussions he had had with Mr P Sole concerning Pingles Pit.

Mr P Sole reminded members of the location of the pit and that it had previously been agreed with the Environment Agency to install a pipe to maintain levels within the pit as so that they did not adversely affect the surrounding land.

He reported that the current owners were thought to be considering blocking the outfall pipe to retain levels, possibly as a result of reduced levels during last summer.

Mr P Sole considered that if this was the done, it would adversely affect the surrounding land with the likelihood that it would not be possible to plough this land.

In response to Mr R Smith, Mr P Sole detailed the condition of the watercourses in the immediate vicinity of the pit.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to arrange an inspection of the pit and surrounding area and to liaise further with Mr P Sole and, on completion of this, be authorised to take any further actions as he considers appropriate.

ii) Damage to the Boards watercourses by livestock.

The Vice Chairman reported on two separate incidents where he and the District Officer were required to remove a dead pony from the watercourse adjacent to Mr Barrett. Members referred to Mr Barrett's fields not being fenced and the damage caused to the bankside by the horses and ponies.

The Chairman considered that the field should be fenced to stop access to the watercourse to protect the horses/ponies and that remedial works to the bankside would need to be carried out.

RESOLVED

1. That a letter be sent to the landowner concerning the damage to the banks of the watercourse, the costs incurred by the Board for the removal of the animals and that the Board required stock-proof fencing to be put up to stop access to the watercourse.

2. That the Board intend to carry out works to the bank irrespective of stock-proof fence erection. The Boards request for stock-proof fencing to be installed in mentioned in the previous point.

3. That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to take any actions as they consider necessary concerning this matter.

iii) Water Control Structure

Mr Allan referred to problems in retaining water levels in the northern part of the District, and with the current arrangements where trying to retain levels in that point of the District caused problems to land between this area and the pumping station.

The Chairman commented that this was a similar issue to that addressed by the Board at Goodjohns Farm and considered the installation of a water control structure would alleviate the problems.

The Chairman referred to the type of structure required, which could be manufactured by L R Boon & Son.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to liaise with Mr Allan and Mr Sole to identify a suitable location for a water control structure in the northern part of the District and to arrange for a suitable structure to be manufactured and installed.

iv) Retirement of the District Officer

The Chairman reminded members that it was the intention of the District Officer to retire in 2024 and the previous discussions and approval by the Board.

He reported that he had interviewed several possible candidates but had not currently found a suitable applicant.

In response to Mr Allpress, the Chairman confirmed that he intended to advertise the position on ‘Indeed’ and possibly through ADA.

The Chairman reported that one of his companies’ employees had expressed an interest in the position but also that he would like to continue with some spraying work linked with his current work.

The Chairman reported that this arrangement would not cause him any problems but wondered how Board members would view it.

Mr R Lee considered that the Boards work would need to take priority, but as long as the required basic hours had been completed, it should not be an issue.

In response to Mr R Smith, the Chairman confirmed that on retirement, the District Officer would be leaving the area and the Boards bungalow would be available for the new employee.

Members considered that the Board should advertise for the position.

RESOLVED

1) That the Chairman be authorised to arrange for an advertisement to be place for the position of District Officer.

2) That the employee of the Chairman be informed of the Boards position and invited to apply.

3) That the Chairman & Vice-Chairman be authorised to take any actions they consider appropriate or necessary in finding a suitable employee to take over on the retirement of the District Officer.

v) Cranbrook Drain

The Chairman referred to the very successful works carried out by the Environment Agency to reduce seepage through the banks of Cranbrook Drain. However, these works had led to additional stress being placed on the banks around the Holwood inlet at Somersham, resulting in a breach of the bank, which requires approx. 10 m of piling on either side of the damage.

Unfortunately, he had been informed by the Environment Agency that these works would require a works order and the works were still currently outstanding.

The Chairman referred to some outstanding works along the Cranbrook and he hoped that the contractor would be able to carry out full repairs to this damaged section at the same time.

vi) <u>Proposed Reservoir to the North of Chatteris (A.W)</u>

Mr R Lee referred to the proposed reservoir and potential implications to the Board if a pipeline was made to the reservoir across the Boards District.

Mr R Angood reported that the current proposals were only outline and it was hoped that more detailed proposals would be put forward in the full consultation due this autumn.

…………………………………
Chairman

………………………
Date