

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Upwell Internal Drainage Board
held at the William Marshall Centre, Welney on Monday 23rd January 2023

PRESENT

K Goodger Esq (Chairman)	P Hartley Esq
P Clabon Esq (Vice Chairman)	R S Means Esq
H G Bliss Esq	A Quail Esq
S A Calton Esq	J Quail Esq
R D Gladwin Esq	Cllr C N T Rose Esq
R Gott Esq	B Scott Esq
G W Gowler Esq	Cllr W Sutton
P M Tegerdine	

Miss Samantha Ablett (representing the Clerk to the Board) and Mr Carl Nunn (District Foreman) were in attendance.

Miss Ablett enquired whether ALL Board members were happy for the meeting to be recorded. All members were in agreement.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Crofts and S Hartley Esq.

B.2049 Declarations of Interest

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

R S Means declared an interest in discussions relating to World's End Farm, Nordelph, and, in connection with Contravention of Byelaws, the trees planted at the drain from Nordelph Pump to Crouches Reservoir, running parallel to Popham's Eau.

B.2050 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Board held on the 18th May 2022 and the Minutes of a Meeting/Inspection held on 6th July 2022 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

Inspection minutes from 6th July 2022 to be amended – Cllr Rose did attend.

Meeting of 18th May 2022 minutes to be amended as not held at MLC offices, held at William Marshall Centre.

B.2051 Election of Board Members

Miss Ablett reported that the term of office of the Members of the Board will expire on the 31st October 2023 and will submit the proposed register of electors which is applicable to the 2023 election.

RESOLVED

That the register of electors is approved.

B.2052 Bank Mandate and National Savings & Investments

Miss Ablett reported that it is necessary to update the signatories after April 2023.

RESOLVED

- i) That Mr P Burrows be added as an authorised signatory of the Barclays Bank Account, should this be required in the future.
- ii) That Mr P Burrows, as Clerk to the Board and Mr K Goodger, as Chairman, be the authorised signatories of the National Savings Investment Account and that the account of Upwell Internal Drainage Board with National Savings and Investments be changed accordingly.

B.2053 Ouse Washes - Section 10 Newsletter & Ouse Washes Update

Further to minute B.2012, Miss Ablett referred to the Newsletters from the Environment Agency dated December 2022 & January 2023, viz;

Ouse Washes Middle Level Barrier Bank raising works

December 2022

Project completion

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

Great news!

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

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

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



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

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

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



What we have done

Raised 30km of Middle Level Barrier Bank from Earith to Welmore Lake Sluice	Raised 2.5km of South Level Barrier Bank from Sutton Gault to Chain Corner
Decommissioned Black Sluice	Decommissioned disused telemetry hut at Earith
Tree and shrub planting at Earith	Improved bridleway access in Earith
Flood wall extension at Sutton Gault	Haul road widening between Welches Dam & Mepal
Raised 7.1km of the haul road from Earith to Welney	Works to increase bridge capacity at Welches Dam
Replaced the existing flood wall at Welches Dam	Installed 5 new bird hides at the RSPB reserve
Installed temporary bridges direct to the bank at Earith & Mepal to reduce traffic on local roads	Installed erosion protection along sections of the bank between Mepal & Welches Dam
Installed hardstanding at Mepal for temporary high-volume pumps	Constructed demountable flood barrier at Welney

Throughout the project we have engaged with the public, schools and organisations adding value in local communities; visits, activities, local noticeboards, public drop-in's, surgeries, newsletters, briefings, questionnaires, press releases, online information page, virtual exhibition rooms, online consultations & meetings, social media.

Completion event

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

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

How to stay in contact with us

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



Floodline 0345 988 1188

Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60

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.



B.2054 Amendments to the Constitution

Further to minute B.2013, Miss Ablett reported the number of elected members had reduced to 14 by amendment to the constitution, with an additional 4 appointed members.

She further reported the Standing Orders had been formally approved by Defra and the quorum had been reduced to 7, subject to them being approved and signed by Chairman. She advised that once the Standing Orders had been signed the Clerk would sign them and they would be sealed.

RESOLVED

That the standing orders be approved and signed by the Chairman.

B.2055 Worlds End Farm, Nordelph

Further to minute B.1982, Miss Ablett reported the ratepayer had alleged that the Board deliberately raised water levels and that this had affected his newly installed land drain. She advised this had been refuted and information on the Board's power to manage water levels for the benefit of ratepayers collectively was supplied to the ratepayer.

B.2056 Complaints and abusive emails from a ratepayer

Miss Ablett reported that complaining emails were still being received from a ratepayer and advised that responses had been sent responding to them providing relevant information.

The Chairman reported he had contacted the Clerk to express his concern with the persistent emails and expressed his view that actions should be taken to address the assertions being made that were unacceptable and at time libellous.

The Chairman further reported that the ratepayer was demanding that levels were managed to ensure that his land drain outfalls were not submersed under water. He also stated that this could not be achieved throughout the year without negatively impacting other ratepayers.

Members agreed the Board couldn't agree to the demands of one landowner to the detriment of the majority.

The Vice Chairman reported that the ratepayer may not yet have received consent for the installation of the underdrains concerned and Members requested the Consulting Engineer to check whether a consent application had been made.

Councillor Sutton reported the complaints and correspondence received from the ratepayer had been ongoing for several years and, as far as the Board was aware, all matters raised had been dealt with.

He considered a letter should be sent to the ratepayer advising that all previous issues raised had been dealt with and therefore considered closed and that any new matters arising would be dealt with in a civil manner and if accusing emails continued to be received these would be reported to the police and would not be dealt with.

The Vice Chairman wanted it put on record that the rates and finance officer, had the Board's full support.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Consulting Engineer checks whether a consent application has been made for the installation of the land drain.
- ii) That the Clerk sends a letter to the ratepayer advising that all previous issues raised had been dealt with and therefore considered closed and that any new matters arising would be dealt with in a civil manner and if accusing emails continued to be received these would be reported to the police and would not be dealt with.

(NB) – R S Means declared an interest when this item was discussed.

B.2057 Roadway to Nordelph Pumping Station and Right of Way

Further to minute B.2014 & B.2018:

- a) Roadway to Nordelph Pumping Station - Miss Ablett reported the Assistant Clerk had confirmed she would request plannings be delivered to allow the roadway to be prepared.
- b) Right of Way – Miss Ablett reported the Board had a right of way from Norfolk County Council from London Lode up the gravel road and past the Pumping Station and that this was personal to the Board and its successors in title.

She further reported the Assistant Clerk had advised she had carried out Land Registry searches on the land adjacent to the Pumping Station, but as the results were not available electronically she had ordered a paper record, which would be sent by post. Miss Ablett advised the Assistant Clerk hoped this would reveal any rights of way that had been granted over the gravel road to the Pumping Station to other land owners/occupiers.

RESOLVED

- a) That the Assistant Clerk writes to Jenna Browne or Simone Skinner of Norfolk County Farms Division requesting another delivery of plannings be delivered before March.
- b) That the results of the Land Registry search on the land adjacent to the Pumping Station be reported at the next meeting.

B.2058 Complaint to Middle Level

Further to B.2048, The Chairman reported that following the inspection by the Board in July, he had written to the Chairman of the Middle Level Commissioners, and both he and the Vice Chairman had attended a meeting with him, the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk.

The Chairman further reported that it had been agreed at the meeting that monthly updates, concerning the electrification of Cock Fen Pumping Station, would be sent to both him and the Vice Chairman, but unfortunately these had not been received.

Members expressed their disappointment that, despite a meeting being held to voice the Boards' concerns, it appeared nothing had changed and requested the Chairman send a further letter to the Chairman of the Middle Level Commissioners and request a meeting with the new Chief Executive.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Chairman write to the Chairman of the Middle level Commissioners expressing the Boards disappointment and dis-satisfaction with the service being provided.
- ii) That the Chairman requests a meeting with Paul Burrows, the new Chief Executive of the Middle Level Commissioners.

B.2059 Electrification of Cock Fen Pumping Station

Further to minute B.2015, Miss Ablett reported the Assistant Clerk had advised that, as requested by the Vice Chairman, she had contacted Adrian Kew, a contact at Waldersey Farms and he had advised her to contact Henry Turtill at Bidwells.

Miss Ablett further reported the Assistant Clerk had confirmed she had spoken with Henry Turtill, in early January, and he had promised to contact their Client to expedite a response relating to the remaining section of roadway to the Pumping Station, which is required for access.

Miss Ablett also referred to the comments made by the Consulting Engineer in his report where he hoped the new electricity supply would be installed during summer 2023, subject to the last remaining legal matters being resolved successfully over the winter months.

Miss Ablett advised that UK Power Networks would not go on site until a right of way existed.

Members discussed the matter in some detail and expressed their disappointment that the Board appeared to be no further forward since their meeting in July.

The Chairman suggested that going forward, and with the Boards approval, he would insist on a timeline of matters already dealt with by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, together with expected dates for finalisation of the outstanding matters.

He advised that both he and the Vice Chairman had discussed whether to approach Kings Lynn IDB or Ely IDB and ask for them to act as Clerk, but they considered the Board was too embedded with the scheme to consider this at this moment in time.

The District Foreman reported that when he had spoken with Rands, they had confirmed the groundworks could commence, which would just leave the bank work outstanding and he considered this would at least get the process moving in anticipation of the bank works being commenced, when the legal matters were resolved.

Mr Gladwin enquired whether the delay was due to UK Power Networks refusing to commence with the work or Waldersey Farms refusing access.

The Vice Chairman advised that Waldersey Farms did not have a problem with access being granted, it was the South Yorkshire Pension Fund who didn't understand the situation.

Miss Ablett explained the situation further and reminded the Board of the £12,500 requested by South Yorkshire Pension Fund before they would grant access and of the Board's refusal to pay the sum requested on the grounds the Board had been using the roadway for many years, since the pumping station had been constructed.

Miss Ablett once again advised that the Assistant Clerk had contacted the South Yorkshire Pension Fund, but they had advised her to correspond with Bidwells, which she had also done.

The Chairman explained the delay was due to the amount of time it was taking to get matters dealt with, when in August both he and the Vice Chairman had requested matters be expedited and yet the Board appeared to be no further forward.

The Vice Chairman considered the Assistant Clerk should follow up her correspondence, where a response was not received in a reasonable amount of time.

Members enquired why there being no right of way over the land prevented UK Power Networks from commencing work and whether any works could commence before the legal matters were resolved.

The Chairman advised that both he and the Vice Chairman would speak with the Consulting Engineer to discuss this further and to enquire whether there was any other works that could commence in the meantime.

Councillor Sutton enquired that if South Yorkshire Pension Fund refused to grant access without the £12,500 easement being paid by the Board whether the Chairman and Vice Chairman should be authorised to consider whether payment should be made so as to progress with the installation of electricity before the Board meeting in May.

Members confirmed that the Board was not willing to pay £12,500 for an easement over the roadway to the pumping station.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Consulting Engineer be asked to contact the Chairman regarding whether UK Power Networks could commence work without legal matters being resolved.
- ii) That the Assistant Clerk continues to chase Henry Turtill at Bidwells to resolve the issues regarding the right of way, as the Board were not willing to pay £12,500, for an Easement over the roadway to the Pumping Station which they had been using for access since the pumping station was constructed.

B.2060 Asset Refurbishments – Grant-in-Aid

Further to minute B.2016, Miss Ablett reported that the Consulting Engineer had included his update on this matter in the Consulting Engineers Report.

B.2061 Contravention of Byelaws

Trees planted at drain from the Nordelph Pump to Crouches Reservoir, running parallel to Popham's Eau.

Further to minute B.2017, Miss Ablett reported the Assistant Clerk had advised her that the Chairman was of the view that if the occupier would not remove the trees the Board should undertake the necessary work and consider recharging the costs, noting however that it may be unlikely that the costs would be repaid without legal enforcement stating that the occupier may take the view that the removal of trees would make the District Foreman's job a lot easier.

Miss Ablett advised a formal notice would need to be served on the occupier before entry could be made and the minimum notice should be at least 7 days for entry.

The Chairman confirmed that at the Board's meetings in January and May 2022, Members had asked for a letter to be sent to the landowner requesting the trees be removed and at the meeting in July 2022, as the trees were still in situ, the Board had asked for a further letter to be sent requesting the trees be removed post Autumn or the Board would arrange for the trees to be removed at a cost to the landowner.

The Chairman considered, that as the trees had not yet been removed, a further letter should be sent to the landowner advising he is to remove the 9 trees within 14 days or the Board would remove them at his expense. He added that should the trees remain in situ after the 14 days had expired a notice of works should be sent to the land owner and the District Foreman advised of this so he could arrange for the trees to be removed before bird nesting.

Members agreed this was the correct course of action.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Clerk writes to the land owner/occupier, as soon as possible, advising he is to remove the 9 trees, already identified, within 14 days or the Board would remove them at his expense.
- ii) That, should the trees remain in situ after the 14 days has expired, a notice of works be sent to the land owner and the District Foreman be advised so he can arrange for the trees to be removed before bird nesting.

B.2062 The Old Croft Joint Maintenance Agreement

Further to minute B.2020;

a) Joint Maintenance Agreement

Miss Ablett reported that following arrangements being made for a joint meeting, the Chairman of Manea & Welney DDC had unfortunately been unable to attend and the meeting had been cancelled. She advised the Clerk had confirmed he had received no further communication.

The Chairman advised he would contact the Chairman of Manea & Welney DDC to discuss the matter further.

b) Clearance of Trees at Mumbys Drove

The Chairman reported that in order to clear trees at Rallingham Hall to allow access to the Old Croft River, it had been necessary to remove hedging along the road at Mumbys Drove, which was within the 9-metre maintenance strip. He advised that as there were several landowners involved, notice had been served advising that the hedge and any structures would have to be removed.

The Chairman advised Members that the hedge was removed as access was not possible through the wooden gates due to the size of the digger and overhead cables for telephone and electricity. He added that the occupier of Rallingham Hall, did not want the Board to access from the end section as this would have caused damage to his well mown frontage and he considered the Board should not have access over his frontage to this parcel of land, which was not maintained anyway.

The Chairman reported the landowners were upset the hedge had been removed and despite notices having been served by the Board, they had accused the Board of an unauthorised removal of the hedge. He advised that Mr Dickson, acting on behalf of the landowners, had proposed that the Board replant the roadside hedge and erect a post and rail fence between the road and the Old Croft River on the south west boundary at the Board's expense.

The Chairman advised there were no trees along the drain and the Board had removed the hedging.

Miss Ablett reported the Assistant Clerk had advised she had served a Section 64 Notice to several land owners for tree removal along the drain, but as well as removing the trees along the drain, the Board had removed hedging from along the roadway which was the boundary to the land owners' fields. The land owners were unhappy that this hedging had been removed from along the roadway, which was the boundary to their land and it was her view that they should be compensated for this damage as allowed under the Land Drainage Act 1991 Section 64(4).

Miss Ablett reported the Chairman had offered to place concrete blocks to act as a boundary to prevent access, which the occupier of Rallingham Hall appeared to be satisfied with, however, this was not considered to be an acceptable solution by the other affected parties.

The Chairman advised that as occupiers would not accept the placement of concrete blocks, whatever was placed on their side of the boundary must be removable so the Board would be able to gain access to maintain the drain in the future.

Miss Ablett advised the Assistant Clerk was concerned that several occupiers might take legal action against the Board.

The matter was discussed further by Members.

Miss Ablett advised, that in view of the confusion, she would review the notice to check the correct notice had been given. She also reported that if the hedging was in situ before the Board's byelaws were in place, this could have a bearing on whether the hedging could be removed.

Mr Bliss considered that no compensation should be paid or hedges replaced as no structures or vegetation should be erected/planted within the 9-metre maintenance strip.

Members thanked both Stephen and Paul Hartley for the work carried out at the Old Croft River.

RESOLVED

- i) That Miss Ablett clarifies the situation regarding both the notice served and of the Board's position if the hedges were in situ before the Board's byelaws came into force.
- ii) That the Assistant Clerk writes to the landowners advising the Board are not prepared to replace the hedge or erect a fence.

POSTING MEETING NOTE

Further to the Board meeting on Monday 23rd January 2023, at which removal of the hedge within the 9-metre maintenance strip was discussed, and due to the confusion arising, Miss Ablett had researched the matter further and discussed the position with the Clerk.

The Clerk advised that if the hedge was in situ for say 15 to 20 years, then consent was in his opinion deemed to have been given, especially where no routine maintenance work had been undertaken in the past and the Board were aware of its existence but had taken no action. He recommended that a post and wire fence be erected, at a cost to the Board. He advised that if the fence was outside the Board's 9 metre maintenance strip, then the fence could be a permanent fixture, however if it was within the 9 metres it would have to be capable of being moved to allow access for future maintenance works.

Having reviewed the information further and taking into account the recommendations by the Clerk, both the Chairman and Vice Chairman agreed a reasonable compromise would be for the Board to erect, at a cost to the Board, a post and wire fence as was originally accepted by Mr Kington.

An email was sent to all Members who were in attendance at the meeting on 23rd January explaining the situation further and advising of the Clerk's recommendations, together with the Chairman's and Vice Chairman's proposals. Members were asked to consider the information provided and confirm whether they were in agreement with the proposal put forward.

RESOLVED

- i) Members approved the Chairmans actions to erect a removable post and wire fence, which would be paid for by the Board.
- ii) That the Assistant Clerk writes to both Mr Roger Kington and Mr Andrew Dickson advising the Board would be prepared to erect a post and wire fence, at a cost to the Board.

B.2063 Clerk's Report

Miss Ablett advised;

i) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

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

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

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

Paul Burrows – to be the new CEO/Clerk - currently in post with the EA as a national Delivery Assurance Manager, and before that as Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for the East Anglia Area, then Flood Strategy Manager – Paul spearheaded Tactical Plans for the Fens which have secured the possibility of obtaining significant grant allocation on a Board by Board basis over a 15 year period, whilst at the same time defining a pathway to better understand the challenges faced and options worth considering for our lowland catchment as climate change and growth tests our current infrastructure arrangements.

Nicola Oldfield – to be the new Chief Engineer – currently in post with the EA as a Senior Project Manager. She most recently project managed the £30M Middle Level Barrier Bank scheme and had just taken over as project manager of the Cranbrook Counter Drain Strategy. She has, in the past, been employed by an IDB and has worked in close partnership with many IDBs including North Level IDB. Jonathan Brown stated how pleased the MLC Executive had been with these two candidates and how easy the choice had been given their knowledge of the area and experience to date.

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

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

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

Climate Change was discussed and it was noted that the MLC had completed its carbon audit and would now start work on carbon reduction and mitigation initiatives. It was also noted that the M&E engineer was looking at base levels of energy consumption at pumping stations,

for example to see if panel heaters are left on permanently. He will be making recommendations to Boards if he identifies scope for reducing power without risking the apparatus.

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

The Chief Executive advised that a decision had been made to move the MLC and IDB's electricity supply contracts from Anglian Farmers to the Green Energy Advice Bureau. This followed several years of extended poor service levels and lack of timely information coming from Anglian Farmers.

The future of IDBs and the value of potential amalgamations was once discussed and this gave rise to questions over small boards being able to secure a quorate for which this had been a particularly poor year. It was agreed that this item should remain on the agenda and that any Chairs who felt that the time was right for their Boards to look again and the advantages/disadvantages of amalgamation would contact the Clerk. It was also agreed that it may be useful to undertake an exercise around updating the original Geoff Beal report which had recommended that the number of Boards within the area administered by the MLC could reasonably be reduced to three or four.

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

ii) Application(s) for byelaw consent

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

<u>Name of Applicant</u>	<u>Description of Works</u>	<u>Date Consent Granted</u>
Anglian Water Services Ltd	Replace watermain on A1101, Wisbech Road, Upwell – Horsehead drain	20/09/2022

iii) Association of Drainage Authorities

a) Annual Conference

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b) Annual Conference 2023

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

c) Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

iv) Smart Level System/District Wide Telemetry Bid

Further to minute B.2021 (v), Miss Ablett reported that telemetry had been installed at all pumping stations except for Cock Fen pumping station.

v) Changes to Electricity Supply Contracts

Miss Ablett referred to the changes to the electricity supply contracts and advised the Clerk had sent a letter to the Chairman explaining the position and the Chairman had agreed for the Board to serve notice to Anglia Farmers and for Green Energy Advice Bureau to handle the energy procurement and management of the electricity contract post 31st March 2023. She enquired whether the Board were able to approve the Chairmans actions.

The Chairman reported abstraction from any inlets from the Environment Agency's rivers will now require an inlet licence so when the Environment Agency consider there to be a drought there WILL BE a ban on allowing any water into the system. He advised that he had campaigned strongly, at the 2 meetings he had attended, for the Old Croft River to be excluded from the irrigation ban and had managed to negotiate that it would be excluded as long as this was not abused.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman's actions regarding changes to the electricity supply contracts be approved.

B.2064 Consulting Engineers' Report, including Planning and Consenting Matters

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

Upwell I.D.B.

Consulting Engineers Report – December 2022

Pumping Stations

Other than the matters previously reported at the last meeting and that described below, only routine maintenance has been carried out.

Xylem telemetry has now been installed at all pumping stations.

Bedlam Bridge

The corroded pump bolts on pump 1 have been replaced with stainless steel ones.

Cock Fen

The factory acceptance of the control panels has been completed at Rands with the panels powered up with motors and level sensors fitted so that it could be run through its operation sequences.

This project has been delayed by several legal matters relating to the new electricity supply to site and it is now planned for installation during summer 2023 as long as the last remaining legal matters can be successfully resolved over the winter months.

Nordelph

Anglia Farmers (AF) invoices are being reviewed and disputed with AF if they appear excessive. Using data from a five-year period from which we were receiving meter readings a formula has been derived to calculate actual usage from pump run hours and length of billing period, so bills can be checked easily. AF are again trying to arrange a site meeting with EDF and UKPN to resolve the meter issue.

Upwell Fen

The inlet level sensor and analogue input card failed during summer and have been replaced.

Electricity Readings

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

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

A meeting was held in September with the Board's Chairman and representatives from the EA together with the Commissioners' Planning Engineer to discuss some of the issues involved. The discussion covered many subject topics including the height of the South Level and Middle Level Barrier Banks, whether the presence of the Welney Gate had been accounted for when determining the target volume of 16M m³ for the flood water storage and taking water from the Counter Drain (Old Bedford) into the Old Croft River for water resources and potential power generation.

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.

Upwell Assets and other FDGiA Schemes

The three main structures identified for the Upwell IDB Asset Refurbishments scheme have been further investigated and the decision was made to wait until the winter months to carry out the surveys. This is due to bank cutting works being needed first and tree cover hindering the use of GPS equipment to more efficiently take the levels. Further discussions with the District Officer to remove the small tree in the bank at Horsehead Drove (Point 92) to finalise the plans will be needed before the end of the year. The surveys will be carried out in early 2023 to facilitate the drawings, cost estimates and project appraisal report to be produced and grant applied for.

The District Officer will be further consulted on the current condition of other culverts of the Old Croft River which solely serve access to private property. Due to their location, contact will also be made with the Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners before writing to the relevant owners to inform them of the maintenance, remedial works or replacement they need to undertake.

The FCRM7 form will also be completed in early 2023 to apply for grant to have a full catchment study carried out by consultants. This study will allow for looking at the options for the various pumping stations and drain network as a whole and inform the business cases needed for future works to these assets.

Planning Applications

<i>MLC Ref.</i>	<i>Council Ref.</i>	<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Type of Development</i>	<i>Location</i>
536	22/00618/F	MRC Engineering	Commercial (Workshop)	Main Road, Lott's Bridge, Three Holes
537	22/00659/PACU3	Mrs I Forth	Residential (Change of Use)	Squires Drove, Three Holes
538	F/YR22/0730/F	Mr S Gray	Equine (All weather riding arena and fencing)	Sixteen Foot Bank, Christchurch*
539	22/00989/F	Ms R Kemp	Commercial (4 Lorry body containers for storage)	Squires Drove, Three Holes
540	22/00781/FM	Fountain Food Machinery	Commercial (B2 General industrial building)	Silt Road Nordelph*
541	22/01193/F	Mr C Underwood	Residence (Garage)	New Road, Welney
542	22/01101/F	Anais Martin	Residential (Change of Use)	Cock Fen Road, Lakes End
543	F/YR22/0893/F	Mrs E Langridge	Residence (Extension)	Crown Road, Christchurch
544	F/YR22/1037/F	Mr C Stevens	Residence	Land south west of The Old Post Office, Upwell
545	F/YR22/1194/FDC	Fenland District Council	Residence	Crown Avenue, Christchurch

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:

Planning applications ending 'PACU' relate to notification for Prior Approval for change of use of agricultural

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

Some of the above may discharge treated foul effluent water into the Board's system either via private treatment plants or Water Recycling Centres (WRC).

The following applicants have chosen to use the Infiltration Device Self-Certification or Checking Service and, in doing so, agreed that if the device was to fail in the future the land owner would be liable for any remedial works to rectify the situation.

(a) Mr England – High Street, Nordelph (MLC Ref No 529)

(b) Mr Bliss – Beechwood Farm, Ha'penny Toll Road, Three Holes (MLC Ref No 531)

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.

A copy of the revised District Plan, sent to Members in June, is provided at the end of the report.

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

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

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

[FIR066 Kings Lynn WN Winter Flood Event 2020 21 \(1\).pdf](#)

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

Norfolk Water Strategy Programme (NWSP)

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

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

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

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

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

[PowerPoint Presentation \(wre.org.uk\)](https://www.wre.org.uk/PowerPoint%20Presentation)

[NWSP-June-2022-Progress-Report-FINAL.pdf \(wre.org.uk\)](https://www.wre.org.uk/NWSP-June-2022-Progress-Report-FINAL.pdf)

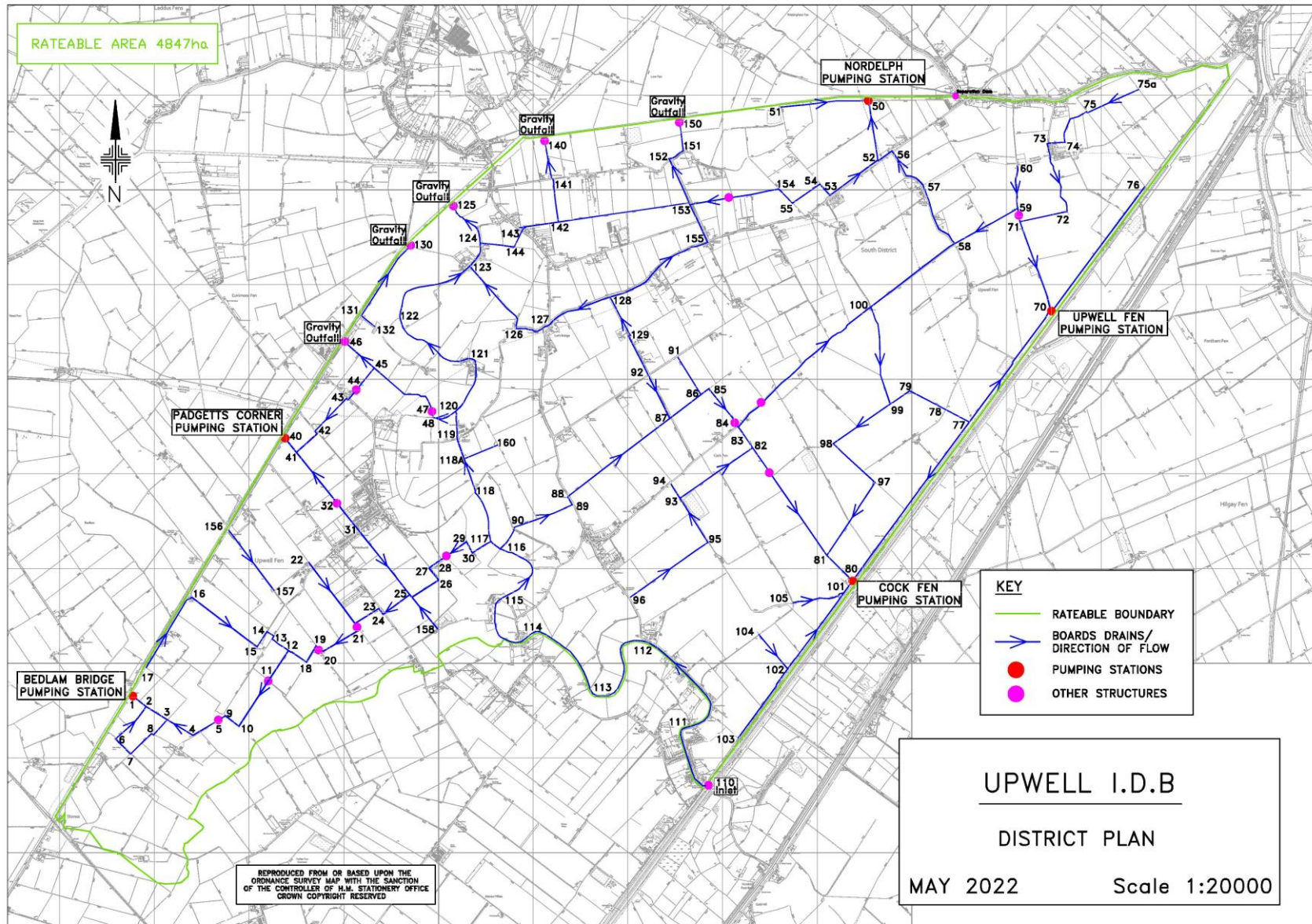
General Advice

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

- (a) An application for byelaw consent was received from Anglian Water Services Ltd for the replacement of a 75mm watermain on the A1101 Welney to Upwell Road that crosses the Board's watercourse under the upstream end of a brick arch culvert at Point 88 and runs alongside the road to Point 89. The new pipe will be installed using directional drilling and will be two metres below the watercourse bed level. The application was recommended for approval.

Consulting Engineer

12 December 2022



RESOLVED

- i) That the Report and actions referred to therein be approved.
- ii) That the District Foreman provides the Consulting Engineer with monthly meter readings and pump hours run readings.

B.2065 Finance Committee Report

The Chairman reported that a meeting of the Finance Committee had not been held.

B.2066 Maintenance Works

Further to minute B.2046, the Chairman reported Russell Fowler had advised the rate charged to the Board for drain maintenance works would be £48 per hour.

He reported that Highways had advised that traffic lights would probably not be required to allow the Board to undertake work on the Old Croft River, as the road was closed due to the work they were carrying out on the new barrier at Welney Bridge, but unfortunately this had resulted in Carl's stationary truck being struck by a car. He added that going forward the likelihood was the Board would be required to use temporary lights for future works.

B.2067 District Foreman's Report

The Board considered the Report of the District Foreman, viz;

Upwell IDB work report May 2022 to January 2023**Drainworks**

The 2023 drainworks programme will continue as it has done for the past few years splitting the district into two parts with the 2023 campaign concentrating on the Nordelph and Cock Fen side of the district while managing any other issues that may arise across the district.

The 2022 drainworks programme went very well and included a few jobs in which we have been waiting for the right time to do them this included the Old Croft dredging through Welney village, with the road being closed for several weeks the decision was made to go ahead with the job which took a week to complete and whilst progressing through the village the culverts were cleared as well. Other works from the roadside that was completed was the section past Dick Johnsons and part of the Old Croft near Rallingham Hall, these three jobs were labour intensive with two trailers carting debris from the drains so the help from board members was much appreciated.

A section of drain near Cock Fen was also dredged out whilst the water levels were extremely low as piles were exposed which made the excavator work easier and improving drain capacity.

The Fen stock at Rallingham hall was fitted on the 3rd October to give us greater control of levels since the removal of the Old Croft outlet door.

Pumping Stations

Bedlam Bridge Pump - The pumps were turned on in October with pump 2 on duty and pump 1 on standby, to date it has only pumped 8 hours. The bolts on the lower part of pump 1 were replaced with stainless ones due to metal fatigue. The weedscreen cleaner is working well at present.

Padgett's Pump - The pump is working well since being turned on in October although has only pumped 4 hours to date.

Cock Fen Pump - At present both pumps are still turned off due to reservoirs being filled although levels are very low with reservoir pumps struggling for water. Pump 2 had its new floor plate was fitted in the summer. The weedscreen cleaner has had a few issues with new switch gear being fitted but is fully operational at present.

Upwell Fen Pump - The pump is currently turned off as Waldersey Farms reservoir is being filled although drain levels remain very low restricting the reservoir pump. The weedscreen cleaner is fully operational at present.

Nordelph Pump - The pump is running well since being turned on in October although has only pumped 8 hours to date. The electric meter is still faulty and awaiting a resolution.

Shelbourne Flailmower

The Flailmower has done 7 seasons since it was purchased in 2016, it had 2 new pins and axle mount brackets fitted by Shelbourne fitters at the start of this season as well as new flails and rotor bearings. There is some play in other pins around the head at present but otherwise working fine. The repair I done on the axle mount bolts on the tractor held out as that looked a potential problem.

Works Truck

As most of you are aware the Isuzu truck was crashed into when parked up whilst doing the dredging through Welney on 9th August and it was written off luckily, I was not in it but was very close to it. I have CCTV footage of the impact that I got off Giles landscapes as it was all caught on their camera. A Ford Ranger was collected on 12th September to replace the Isuzu and is going well at present. A hire truck was provided by the other parties' insurance whilst the Isuzu was being assessed.

New Holland Tractor

The tractor has performed well again although it did have an AdBlue fault again causing it to go into limp mode due to AdBlue sediment building up in the exhaust due to the engine not running hot enough to burn it off, this has happened a few times before but there does not seem to be any remedy for this at the moment. I carried out the smaller 600-hour service to keep costs down now the warranty has run out. Its next service is at 3600 hours.

Summary

This year has been exceptionally dry thus the pumps are not doing much at the moment but with the climate changes that seem to be happening we are looking at ways to store water through the summer as the levels were extremely low this year, with Welney being dredged we should be able to replenish the Bedlam area better than we have before. I will be looking at possibly building water systems up earlier next year so we can have more water capacity through the summer.

If anyone has any questions or queries, please don't hesitate to contact me or I am happy to answer questions at the meeting.

Carl Nunn

F:\Admin\Word\Upwell\mins\23.1.23

The Chairman expressed his thanks, on behalf of the Board, to Carl for his hard work and services to the Board

RESOLVED

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

B.2068 Environment Officer's Newsletter

Miss Ablett referred to the Conservation Officer's Newsletter which had previously been circulated to Members, viz;

MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS

Telephone: 01354 602965
07977 068864
Email: sofi.lloyd@middlelevel.gov.uk
Website: www.middlelevel.gov.uk



MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICES
85 WHITTLESEY ROAD
MARCH
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
PE15 0AH

Sofi Lloyd
Environment Officer

Upwell IDB

Environmental Update – January 2023

Introduction

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

I have been familiarising myself with the IDB area, its approaches and plans as well as I can, remotely, over winter, but from Spring onwards I would like to plan some visits to the IDB to develop a much better understanding of the area, so will be in touch to do so. I have of course been taking note of my surroundings each time I have driven through the district which has been quite a few, on my way to Salters Lode and St. Germans etc.

1. Process and compliance review

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

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

2. GIS system development

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

3. Protected Species - General

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

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

a) Badgers

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

b) Birds

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

i. Barn owls

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

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

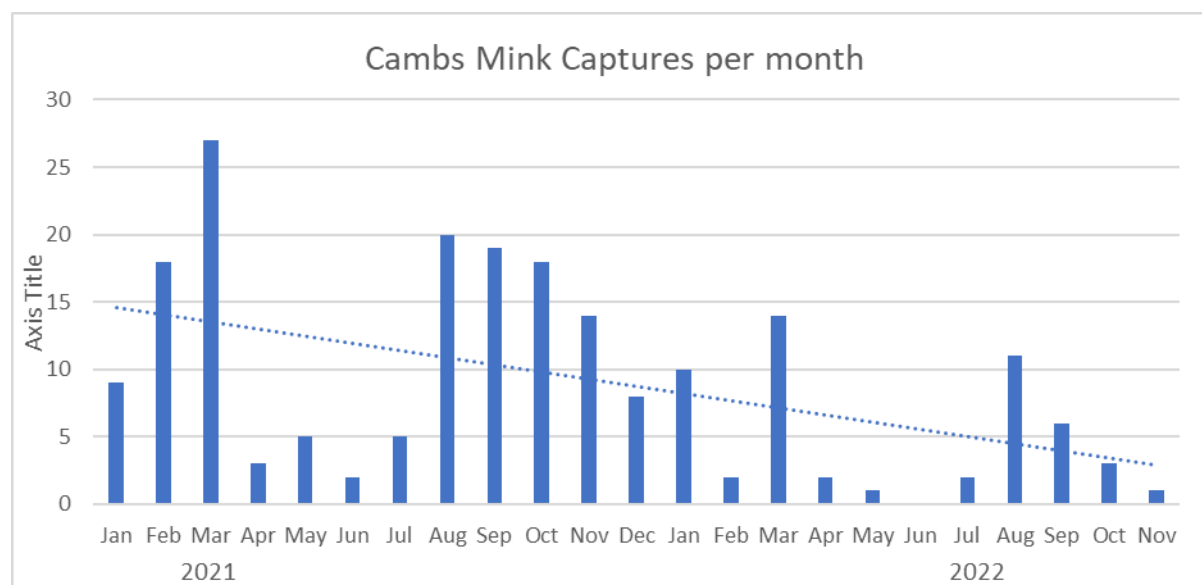
i. Avian Flu

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

c) Mink & Water Voles

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

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



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

Middle Level mink 2022_List

List of mink captures around the Middle Level in 2022

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

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

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

4. Invasive species

When any non-native species (particularly the following) are spotted, please record the location using the what3words app ([what3words /// The simplest way to talk about location](#)) if possible (if not postcode or grid ref) and inform us ASAP.

Useful identification guides and information can be found online at [ID sheets » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://www.nonnativespecies.org/)

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

d) *Floating Pennywort*

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

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

e) *Azolla*

Common across the MLC area. Please record and notify us as above.

f) *Chinese Mitten Crabs*

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

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

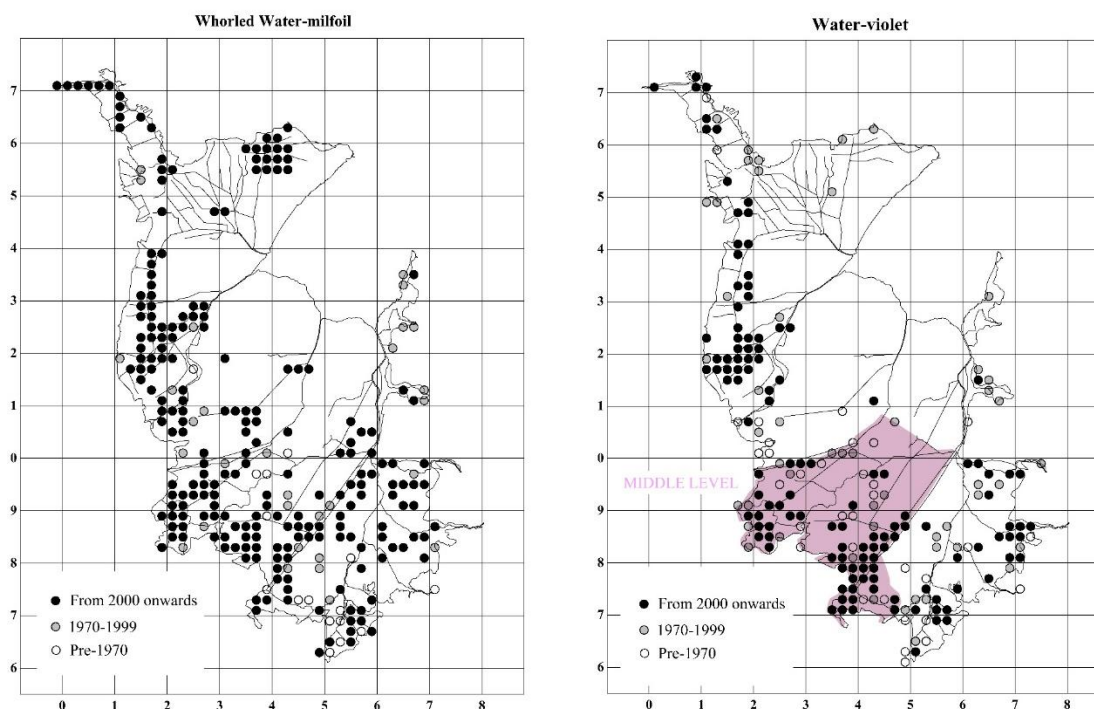
We will continue to monitor the recommended approaches and will adapt ours promptly to follow when necessary.

5. Fenland Flora Project

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

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

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



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

6. Eels

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

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

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

7. Environmental Stewardship.

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

8. Carbon & Climate

There are increasingly a number of low-carbon, sustainable alternatives available for many of the common materials and equipment used in flood risk management, such as low-carbon concrete and steel, solar powered mechanical and electrical equipment and coir roll for bank stabilisation.

Please get in touch to discuss any projects which involve these or similar materials or equipment to understand if any are suitable for you to consider.

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

9. Paludiculture

I attended a workshop in Cambridge to discuss the progress of knowledge acquisition and trials around growing commercial crops, associated with wetlands in lowland areas, where the water level has been raised to reduce or eliminate CO2 emissions from degraded peat. This is known as paludiculture. This includes the potential for receiving an income for carbon sequestration from such approaches. As you would expect, there is a focus on the Cambridgeshire fens as a key area for development of this approach along with Somerset, Lancashire and the Lincs fens. If you would like to know more about how this topic is progressing, would like to get involved in some trials or would like to have a go at growing a paludiculture crop such as *Typha latifolia* (Bullrush or cattail) or Sphagnum moss yourself commercially, then please do get in touch.

10. Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDBs

I have a copy of the above guide, published by ADA last September, for each Chairman and District Officer which I can hand to you when I visit if you don't have a copy already. Until then, an on-line version is available from [here](#) and you can also request copies from ADA directly admin@ada.org.uk. ADA are planning workshops on the 1st February to help deliver some of the key topics of the guide in more detail and to allow the opportunity for more contextualised discussions.

B.2069 Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions

Miss Ablett reported that ADA has increased subscriptions by 4.5% for 2023, from £875 to £915.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription for 2023 be paid.

B.2070 Health and Safety Report

Further to minute B.2003, the Chairman reported that the Cope Safety Management visit to the District on 12th January 2023 had gone well and there were no matters for the Board to attend to. He requested that, once visits had been arranged, both he and the Vice-Chairman be reminded of the date nearer the time, viz;



Site Safety Inspection Record

Upwell IDB

Complete

Name of organisation:	Upwell IDB
Date of site visit	12.01.2023 09:07 GMT
Address of inspected premises	Pates Farm Wisbeach Road Tips End Welney PE14 9SQ
Name of Advisor	Martin Clark
Time of arrival at site:	12.01.2023 09:07 GMT
Audit Name	Upwell IDB

Audit**An opening meeting was held with**

Upwell IDB

Have there been any accidents since our last visit?

No

None Recorded.

Have there been any new starters since our last visit?

No

None recorded.

1

It was pleasing to note that no significant issues were observed at Cock Fen, Upwell Fen, Padgetts Corner Bedlam Bridge and Nordelph pumping stations.

Signage remains clearly visible, evidence of clearance of undergrowth was observed and it was understood that radio communications are maintained when lone working in addition to provision of life preservers for employees working near water. (Predominantly caroming operations)

2

It was understood that the old pumps at Cock Fen pumping station are scheduled to be removed and replaced with 3 phase electrical pumps in due course. The infrastructure and electrical supply have been approved but work has not yet commenced with installation.

Photographic Risk Assessment**Signature of person informed****Signature of person informed 1****Signature of person informed**

Signed on behalf of Ken Goodger by advisor
13.01.2023 10:00 GMT

Advisor's signature

Martin Clark
13.01.2023 10:00 GMT

Departure time

12.01.2023 12:09 GMT

Photographic Risk Assessments closed out during the visit.

Nil

Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments

0
From 0 to 99

B.2071 Contributions from Developers

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

B.2072 Rates Outstanding for more than one year

Miss Ablett referred to the rates outstanding for more than one year shown on the confidential papers and advised that most of these related to land where the owner/occupier was unknown. She advised a GIS mapping project was in hand to assist with this, however this would not be a quick process.

RESOLVED

That a breakdown of the amount relating to unknown land ownership be provided at the next meeting with maps of the land in question for the Board members to review.

B.2073 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;

Upwell 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 Upwell 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 Upwell Internal Drainage Board on application to:

The Clerk
Upwell 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

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

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

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

28/05/2022 15/06/2022 15/06/2022

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

G. REECH - NM ITIN GS LLP

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

G. REECH - NM ITIN GS LLP

Date

15/06/2022

*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:

UPWELL 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 means that this authority
	Yes	No*	
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:

18/05/22

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE B. 2037

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

Chairman

Clerk

R. Crisley

SIGNED REQUIRED

B. G. H. H. H.

SIGNED REQUIRED

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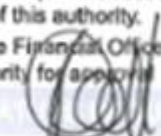
Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2022 £	
1. Balances brought forward	195,092	397,727	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	197,052	206,876	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	310,432	10,789	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	37,003	34,256	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	16,898	30,318	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	250,948	146,122	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	397,727	404,696	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	409,345	427,822	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	3,539,847	3,539,847	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	518,909	501,695	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



Date

3rd May 2022

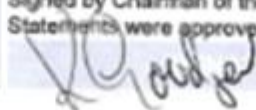
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

16/05/22

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE B.2039

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



SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD – DB0116

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



Date

14/09/2022

* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN02. 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;



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.

PARTNERS

James D Case FCA
Christopher D Ridgway FCA
Andrew P Worsley FCA

Sam G C Roper FCA
Barbara Nicholas CTA
Andrew R Baird FCA

Tina J Ryan FCA
Scott J Day FCA
Amanda E Newman FCA

Paul W Jefferson FCA
Jonathan P Moore FCA
Nicholas Sibley CTA

ASSOCIATES

Richard A Atwood ATT
Stephen D Hobbs ACA
Ben Smith ACA

Scott R Bailey FCA
Imogen E Worley ACA
Helen Rockledge CTA

PRACTICE MANAGER

Joan S Francis

Whitings LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales, number 02405208. The undersigned Partners and Whitings Capital LLP are the members of Whitings LLP. The registered office is: Greenwell House, Greenwell Court, Stylover Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP22 7LX. Registered for automatic audit work in the UK, regulated for a range of investment business activities, and licensed to carry out the reserved legal activity of non-contentious probate in England and Wales by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

BURY ST EDMUNDS | ELY | KING'S LYNN | MARCH | MILDENHALL | PETERBOROUGH | RAMSEY | ST IVES | ST NEOTS | WISBECH

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 slump 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 within 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

B.2074 Appointment of Internal Auditor

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



middle level
commissioners

Internal Audit Tender Proposal to
Internal Drainage Boards and District Drainage
Commissioners under the administration of the
Middle Level Commissioners

November 2022



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Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Your Requirements

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

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

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

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



Our Audit Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

A -Return, Accounts & Completion (Annually)

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

B - Purchases (Cyclically)

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



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

Minutes

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

Value for Money

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

Risk Management

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

Ethical Standards and Sustainability

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

D - Budget and Variance Analysis (Cyclically)

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

E - Sales (Cyclically)

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



F - Petty Cash (Cyclically)

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

G - Wages (Cyclically)

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

H - Assets (Cyclically)

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

I - Bank (Annually)

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

J - Trial Balance & Nominal (Cyclically)

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

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



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

Consultancy and Advice

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

Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption

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

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

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

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

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

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



About Whittings LLP

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

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

Service Offerings

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

Sector Specialisms

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

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



Our Fees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Key Personnel and Career Summaries

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

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

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

The proposed core audit team will be:

Your Audit Principle

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

Your Relationship Manager

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

Your Audit Team

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



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

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

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



Appendix B - List of Administered Boards

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



RESOLVED

That the appointment of Whittings LLP be approved.

B.2075 Defra IDB1 Returns

Miss Ablett referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2021/2022 which the Board noted and approved, viz;

Internal Drainage Boards in England



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 £.

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE 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	21,042
2. KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL	31,675
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	52,717

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		156,613
2. Special Levies		50,263
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		0
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		3,636
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		370
9. Interest and Investment Income		20
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		0
11. Other Income		6,762
Total income		217,664
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		0
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		40,789
14. Watercourse maintenance		86,112
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		45,195
16. Administration		24,269
17. PSCAs		0
18. Rechargeable Works		0
19. Finance Charges		30,318
20. SSSIs		0
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		655
22. Other Expenditure		903
Total expenditure		228,241

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		0
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		(10,577)
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		34,970
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?.....

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

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?.....

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

SSSI water level management plans

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

If so, which ones:

Area of SSSI with IDB water level management plans.

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

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

Access to environmental expertise

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

Appropriately skilled Board Members (e.g. Board member from an Environmental Body/Authority)

☐

Co-opted members

☐

Directly employed staff

☒

Contracted persons or consultants

☐

Environmental Partners/NGOs

☐

Other (please describe)

☐

Asset Management

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

ADIS

☐

Paper Records

☒

Other Electronic System

☒

Has your Board continued to undertake visual inspections and update asset databases on an annual basis?

Yes ☒

No ☐

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

72.1

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

5

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

4.51 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 ☐

Board membership and attendance

How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	20
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	6
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	13
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	6
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	13
Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	2

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

Complaints procedure

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

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

Public Engagement

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

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

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

2.37%

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

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

Signature



Date

12/01/2022

Name in BLOCK LETTERS

MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT

Designation

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Email address

sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

B.2076 Expenditure/ Estimate Update

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

**UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET MONITORING 2022/2023**

	<u>Approved budget</u> 2022/2023 £	<u>Actual to</u> 30/11/2022 £	<u>Forecast to</u> 31/03/2023 £	<u>Remarks</u>	
1 District labour	38,000	24,316	38,000	A Service/repair tractor-mower	4,130
2 Insurances and telephones	4,100	3,515	4,000	Repairs/paint exterior - Bedlam p/s	1,842
3 Repairs and renewals	8,000	11,503 ^A	14,000	Remedial electrical works - Bedlam p/s bungalow	<u>1,010</u>
4 General maintenance	26,000 ^B	28,895 ^C	32,000	B - Includes for contractor hire: slubbing	18,000
5 Fuel (oil and electricity)	30,000 ^D	12,637	30,000 ^E	C - Includes for contractor hire: slubbing	19,155
6 District Officers' fees etc	4,650	3,488	4,650	C - Includes tree cutting/chipping	6,165
7 Administration charge, Health and, Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising etc	24,750	10,670	25,000	D - Provision based on 5 year average plus 50% for new contract rates	
8 Future capital works	9,400 ^F	4,700 ^F	9,400 ^F	E - Increased rates & cap adj from October	
9 Public Works Loan	30,318 ^G	23,598 ^G	30,318 ^G	F - Funding for future capital projects - equivalent to 1p rate	
10 Environment Agency - Precept	41,605	41,604	41,605 ^H	G - Includes for loan for Cock Fen electrification	
11 Tractor / Flail mower replacement	15,500 ^I	7,750 ^I	16,900 ^I	H - Environment Agency charge	57,046
12 Improvement works	177,500	51,365	173,500 ^J	Middle Level contribution	<u>15,441</u>
				I - Depreciation on heavy plant	41,605
				J - Cock Fen p/s electrification	150,000
LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Fishery Rent etc	409,823	224,040	419,373	Telemetry - 5 stations at £4,500	22,500
	194,787 ^K	69,332 ^L	200,538 ^M	Replace wet well bolts - Bedlam p/s	<u>1,000</u>
	215,036	154,709	218,835		173,500
Estimated General Fund:				K - Includes:	
Open balance at 01.04.2021	160,260	160,260	160,260	Asset replacement fund (Depreciation)	15,500
Rates Raised - 23.00p	216,447	216,472	216,472	Loan funding - Cock fen p/s electrification	<u>150,000</u>
Net Expenditure	215,036	154,709	218,835		165,500
Balances	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	L - Includes:	
(Estimated) Closing balance	<u>161,671</u>	<u>222,023</u>	<u>157,897</u>	Asset replacement fund (Depreciation)	7,750
				Loan funding - Cock fen p/s electrification	51,365
					<u>0</u>
				M - Includes:	59,115
				Asset replacement fund (Depreciation)	16,900
				Loan funding - Cock fen p/s electrification	148,141
				Grant-in-aid - telemetry installation (50% x cost)	11,250
				Asset fund - telemetry installation (50% x cost)	11,250
				Asset fund - Replace wet well bolts - Bedlam p/s	<u>1,000</u>
					188,541

RESOLVED

That the update be approved.

B.2077 Date of Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 17:30 at the Lamb and Flag Public House, Welney.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date