MANEA AND WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

At a Meeting of the Manea and Welney District Drainage Commissioners held at The Lamb and Flag Public House, Welney on Wednesday 10th January 2024

PRESENT

J E Heading Esq (Chairman)
R M C Sears Esq (Vice Chairman)
C Barnes Esq
J Carney Esq
N Cook Esq
C Crofts Esq
R Gladwin Esq
J H Hawes Esq
M E Heading Esq
C Marks Esq
Mrs A J Morris
N V M Walker Esq
M D R Fairey Esq

Mr Robert Hill (representing the Clerk to the Commissioners) & Mrs Nicola Oldfield (Chief Engineer) were in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from P D Hawes Esq, S Imafidon Esq and C W Sears Esq.

The Chairman referred to the death of Mr Paul Jolley on Sunday 24th September 2023 and informed them that he had been a Commissioner since May 1987 and a Member of the Finance Committee since February 2005.

RESOLVED

> That The Commissioners appreciated of the services rendered by Mr Jolley to the district be recorded in the minutes.

C.1010 Declarations of Interest

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

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

Councillor Crofts and Mr Gladwin declared interests (as Members of Upwell IDB) in the payments made to and any matters concerning the Upwell IDB.

Councillor Crofts declared an interest (as a Councillor) in the payment made to Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk

Councillor C Marks declared an interest (as a member of the planning committee of Fenland District Council) in any planning matters concerning Fenland District District.

C.1011 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Commissioners held on the 8th June 2023 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

C.1012 Constitution & Membership
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**4**
Meeting:	**MANEA & WELNEY DDC**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Wednesday 10th January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Polly Tombleson**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the current status of its membership and the role they each play as members serving the interests of the Board.

B. Review attendance records and identify any resolutions as necessary.

C. There are currently **2** vacancies

D. To consider previous discussions of amalgamation – SM, MWe & Up.

E. Reinforce the need for members to view all five 'Good Governance' videos.

F. Identify any topic areas for additional training, as well as any inspection/site visit requirements.

G. Annual appointment of Chair, Vice-Chair & Finance Committee.

1. Current status

1.1 The table below outline the current composition of the Board and the quorum as detailed in the standing orders.

	Elected Members	Appointed Members	Total Members	Quorum
Composition	14	N/A		5
Actual	12	3 FDC, 1 KLWN	16	
Vacancies	2		2	

1.2 The table below details the current elected members of the Board

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary

1	Christopher Barnes	Ratepayer	
2	Neil Cook	Co-opted member to vacancy - ratepayer	Oddfellows rep
3	Michael Fairey	Nominee of Ratepayer (M Crouch)	
4	Roger Gladwin	Ratepayer	
5	James Hawes	Nominee of Ratepayer (Westfield Farms)	
6	Peter Hawes	Ratepayer	
7	John Heading	Ratepayer	Chairman
8	Marc Heading	Ratepayer	
9	Alison Morris	Ratepayer	
10	Charles Sears	Ratepayer	
11	Robert Sears	Ratepayer	Vice-Chair
12	Verden Walker	Nominee of ratepayer (M Crouch)	
13			
14			

1.3 The table below details the current appointed members of the Board.

1.4 Special levy paying District Councils appoint members to Boards and their role is to be part of the Board representing all the non-agricultural interests within the Board's district. The Council must consider appointing members who have relevant knowledge or experience that is relevant to the Board and its district.

1.5 Appointed members do not need to be councillors or employees of the Council, therefore can represent wider relevant interests within the district, eg major infrastructure, commerce, community groups, environmental interests.

No	Name	Appointing Council	Commentary (one of three categories)
1	James Carney	(FDC)	Councillor
2	Christopher Crofts	(BCKLWN)	Councillor
3	Sidney Imafidon	(FDC)	Councillor
4	Charlie Marks	(FDC)	Councillor

1.6 All Members are reminded that have equal status to each-other around the Board table and are here to serve the interests of the Board.

2. Attendance

2.1 The table below outlines the attendance record for the last four meetings of the Board.

Elected Members

No	Name	8/6/2023	8/2/2023	2/2/2022	3/2/2021
1	Christopher Barnes	apologies		attended	
2	Neil Cook	attended	attended	attended	attended
3	Michael Fairey	attended	attended	apologies	attended
4	Roger Gladwin	apologies	attended		
5	James Hawes	attended	apologies	attended	attended
6	Peter Hawes	attended	apologies	apologies	apologies
7	John Heading	attended	attended	attended	attended
8	Marc Heading	attended	attended	attended	attended
9	Alison Morris	attended	attended	attended	n/a
10	Charles Sears	apologies	attended	apologies	attended
11	Robert Sears	attended	apologies	attended	attended
12	Verden Walker	apologies	attended	attended	attended
13					
14					

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022	2/11/2021
1	John Heading	apologies	attended		apologies

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	8/6/2023	8/2/2023	2/2/2022	3/2/2021
1	James Carney (FDC)		n/a	n/a	n/a
2	Christopher Crofts (BCKLWN)	attended	attended	attended	
3	Sidney Imafidon (FDC)		n/a	n/a	n/a
4	Charlie Marks (FDC)	attended			apologies

3. Vacancies & appointments

3.1 There are currently 2 vacancies.

3.2 Annual appointment of Chair, Vice-Chair & Finance Committee.

4. Composition and amalgamations

4.1 The Board is encouraged to continually monitor and review its membership, financial and climate resilience, along with assessing its influence locally, regionally and nationally. These are all factors that may lead the Board to consider changing its composition and/or amalgamation with (an)other Board(s).

4.2 Amalgamations and composition changes are not swift processes and can take a number of years. They require planning and additional/specialist resourcing by the MLC as your clerk, Environment Agency and Defra. Therefore, the Board is encouraged to think ahead five to ten years in its decision making, thinking about the next generation.

4.3 The Clerk to report on previous discussions regarding a possible amalgamation between – SM, MWe & Up.

5. Training

5.1 All Members are asked to digest the Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards published by the Association of Drainage Authorities and view the five accompanying videos intended to bring the guide to life. They are available via https://middlelevel.gov.uk/about/idb-governance/

5.2 To date 0 of 16 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 6 of 16 Board Members have reported viewing 2 of the 5 videos.
To date 1 of 16 Board Members has reported viewing 3 of the 5 videos.

5.3 Members are asked to identify any topics areas they would value further training on as well as any site inspections that would help them undertake their role on the Board more effectively.

5.4 Member training is reported to Defra as part of the annual IDB1 return.

Author Name: Polly Tombleson
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

a) Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED

That J E Heading be appointed Chairman of the Commissioners

b) Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED

That R M C Sears be appointed Vice-Chair of the Commissioners

c) Appointment of Finance Committee

RESOLVED

That the Finance Committee be constituted as follows:

Cllr C Crofts, R D Gladwin, M D R Fairey, J E Heading, Ms A Morris & R M C Sears.

Mr Hill reported that during the now Clerk's 10 months in his role as Clerk to the Boards, he had attended a number of meetings and taken stock of the way in which the Middle Level Commissioners were supporting Boards with the right paperwork to ensure they were providing clarity and consistency across Boards. He advised that with this in mind the Clerk considered the agendas needed a refresh to assist Members with the flow and make it easier for minutes of the meetings to be prepared to a better standard and in a timely manner.

Mr Hill advised that the Clerk having attended several Board meetings during the past year, it was evident that some Boards did not have as good attendance as others and were struggling in terms of membership and governance. He added that the purpose of this agenda item was to assist in reporting this information to Defra in order to bring greater clarity around the strength of Boards in terms of membership. It was the Clerk's intention that for those Boards that were struggling it may trigger conversations around whether they needed to consider amalgamating with neighbouring Boards.

Mr Hill reported that the agenda item would also encourage Members to think about training they may need to assist them with the important role they undertook on behalf of the Board and to consider whether there was any additional training they would like or required that wasn't facilitated through the ADA videos, that had been provided in the past. He added that if this was the case a conversation could be had as to whether the Middle Level Commissioners could support Boards with that or whether it was something the Board could arrange themselves.

C.1013 Governance

Internal Controls

Mr Hill reported that there had been no changes to the Internal Controls in place and that these had now been set out in a summary document which had now been put on the website. He further reported that these controls were generally financial and it was proposed to look at formalising 'controls' for the internal management process of the boards.

RESOLVED

The Commissioners considered that they are satisfied with the current Internal Controls.

Risk Management

Mr Hill reported that the Clerk was currently reviewing and updating the Commissioners Risk Management Policy and it was likely that this would be put forward for consideration and approval at the next scheduled meeting of the Commissioners.

RESOLVED

The Commissioners gave consideration and approved the Risk Management Policy.

IDB1

Mr Hill referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2022/2023 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 2023

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 2023 a copy must be provided to:

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Division, Ground Floor, Seacole, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF via flood.reports@defra.gov.uk
- Engineering & Standards - Policy Manager, Asset Management and Engineering, **Environment Agency**, Goldcrest House, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey. GU10 4LH via james.addicott@environment-agency.gov.uk
- The Chief Executives of:
  - all local authorities that pay special levies to the Board;
  - all County Councils or London Boroughs within which the Board is situated.

Please complete the form electronically. If you are unable to complete the form electronically, please complete in BLOCK LETTERS using **black ink**.
Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Section A – Financial information

Preliminary information on special levies issued by the Board for 2023-24

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 2023-24 (forecast)	
Name of local authority	**2023-24 forecast £**
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	40,160
2. KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL	23,225
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**63,385**

Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2023

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 2023 £
INCOME		
1. Drainage Rates		148,034
2. Special Levies		57,518
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		817
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		1,617
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		4,626
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		
7. Loans		
8. Rechargeable Works		
9. Interest and Investment Income		1
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		
11. Other Income		6,277
Total income		**218,890**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		9,252
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		76,803
14. Watercourse maintenance		82,737
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		37,376
16. Administration		15,994
17. PSCAs		
18. Rechargeable Works		
19. Finance Charges		
20. SSSIs		
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		468
22. Other Expenditure		278
Total expenditure		**222,908**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**(4,018)**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		54,789
25. Grant income not applied in year		7,445

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

17. State all costs associated with the PSCA

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

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

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

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

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

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

24. Total balance of developer fund year end.

25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

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

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

Biodiversity

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

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

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

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

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

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

SSSI water level management plans

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

If so, which ones:

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

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

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

[ ]

Access to environmental expertise

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

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

Asset Management

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

ADIS	☐
Paper Records	☒
Other Electronic System	☒

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

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

32.5

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

2

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

5.12 cumecs

Health and Safety

Does the Board have a current Health and Safety policy in place?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Does the Board have a responsible officer for Health and Safety?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Have there been any reportable incidents in the past year?	Yes ☐	No ☒

If so, please summarise in the box below:

[ ]

Guidance and Best Practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Has your Board adopted the following governance documents?

Standing Orders .... Yes ☒ No ☐

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

Byelaws ....Yes ☒ No ☐

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

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

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

Financial Regulations........Yes ☒ No ☐

Register of Member's Interests........Yes ☒ No ☐

Anti-fraud and corruption policy........ Yes ☒ No ☐

Board membership and attendance

How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	16
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	5
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	13
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	3
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	8
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?

1.31%

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

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

Board membership and attendance

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

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

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

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

Section C – Declaration

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

Signature	
Date	17/10/2023
Name in BLOCK LETTERS	MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT
Designation	ASSISTANT TREASURER
Email address	sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

Exercise of Public Rights

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

Banking

Mr Hill reported, that as had previously been reported, due to regulatory changes from the Commissioners bankers, the type of accounts held by all authorities had changed. He informed members that the new arrangements were a non-interest-bearing current account and an interest-bearing treasury deposit account and that higher interest could be gained on ‘surplus’ balances by putting them on deposit for fixed periods, however, the minimum balance for this as £100,00 and higher rates of interest was available for higher deposit amounts and longer periods of investments. He explained the process for placing deposits and discussions he had had with the Clerk and that they wanted to gauge Board’s views on ‘pooling’ investments funds into a single account to enable all Board’s to access better rates of interest on balances. He confirmed that to allow this, Board’s balances would have to be transferred into a single named account, likely in the name of Middle Level Commissioners.

In response to queries raised, Mr Hill confirmed:

- All Board’s would continue to operate their current and Treasury deposit accounts for normal payments/receipts.
- The proposal would allow Boards with ‘surplus’ funds less than £100,000 to access higher interest rates
- The proposal would allow Boards with ‘surplus’ funds over £100,000 to access higher interest rates
- The interest rates change daily, and from ‘entry level’ to highest level can be between 1.75% - 2.0% higher
- The highest rates are available for ‘long-term’ deposits
- Interest on ‘pooled’ deposits would be appointed pro-rota to each individual Board’s deposit and transferred to each Board’s banking account
- If Boards were in agreement with the proposal, then a Governance document would need to be put in place to cover all aspects of the operation of the proposal and concerns raised by Boards
- Participation in the proposal could be delegated to the Chairman, and if an individual Board wished to withdraw, then this could be actioned on the instruction of the Chairman
- Any ‘notice period’ to withdraw would be determined by the remaining period of any investment deposit held by the Board
- The deposits would be within the Barclays portfolio, as this was within the mandated authority currently given
- It would not currently be possible to deposit funds outside of Barclays as there was no mandated authority given by the Boards
- If it was decided better returns could be gained by investing outside of Barclays, then resolutions to open accounts/invest in these institutions would need to be made at Board level.

Members considered the proposal would provide additional benefit to the Commissioners, but with likely reducing base rates, the margin would likely reduce further.

They resolved to review further at the next meeting when further information may be available and a written 'Governance' proposal could be reviewed.

C.1014 Clerks Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**6**
Meeting:	**MANEA & WELNEY DDC**	**Subject:**	**CLERK'S REPORT**
Date:	**Wednesday 10th January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the content of the report and feedback on items as appropriate.

B. Support the proposed approach to determining the next electricity contract.

C. In determining their valuations for insurance purposes, recognise the limitations associated with their current valuations and the risks they hold of being underinsured.

D. To consider the NEST Death in Service provision.

1. MLC Services available for IDBs

1.1 There has been significant incremental change over the last 10-20 years in terms of IDB governance standards, financial requirements, health & safety, environmental legislation and capital works delivery, along with a significant increase in the scale and nature of planning and partnership work.

1.2 However, what limited agreements and fee arrangements there are in place with IDBs about the MLC Services offered and received pre-date much of this evolution and as such there is significant ambiguity.

1.3 As an example of this, the current 'Clerkship agreements' with Boards was agreed in 2014 however there are many services provided by the MLC that all parties would consider as core 'clerkship' services that are not specified within the current agreement, including managing elections, arranging meeting, taking minutes, reviewing policies and publications.

1.4 The scale and nature of change ahead of us may well be more significant than that which has been experienced in the last decade. The services provided by the MLC to local IDBs require a review and refresh such that they become fit for the future.

1.5 The intent is to develop a service catalogue over the next 12-18 months that will clarify the full range of services that are offered by MLC staff, along with associated terms and conditions and fee arrangements.

1.6 Boards will be offered opportunity to engage in the development of the catalogue, such that if there are capacity and capability gaps between the services Boards want and what capacity and capability MLC staffing has to deliver, then the MLC Board can consider if and how they address this within a final service offer.

2. IDB Key Health Indicators

2.1 At the MLC and IDB Chairs session on 6th October 2023, Paul Burrows shared the observations from his first suite of IDB meetings and outlined the viability concerns of Conington & Holme IDB that have been escalated to Defra. Observations include that some Boards:

1. struggle for membership and attendance.
2. want to amalgamate but with no one willing to amalgamate with
3. have with no clear succession for critical roles
4. are underwritten by the hands-on inputs of a few (with costs not always passed on within rates)
5. where there's limited involvement from all members around the table
6. with limited financial reserves
7. with aging assets and limited capital reserves
8. will potentially struggle to afford to deliver their ever-increasing statutory duties, powers & governance standards

2.2 The Chairs explored the following question;
Beneath the surface, how healthy is your Board today, for tomorrow and for the next generation?

- What worries you?
- Do we have a good picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of our Boards?
- How do we ensure risks and issues are tackled proactively?
- How can we better share success, learning and support across Boards?

2.3 The intent is to develop a suite of 'Key Health Indicators' (KHIs) and comparison metrics for the Middle Level Commissioners and administered IDBs. These will help Boards better understand and proactively address their key risks and understand their relative health. KHIs will also help the Middle Level Commissioners assure and focus their service provision for IDBs.

2.4 The picture created will provide an evidence base to inform a business case for change in terms of the IDB landscape within the Middle Level, as the Chairs reflected back to work undertaken by Geoff Beal a number of years ago. Chairs were supportive of the need to develop future options, assess costs:benefits and identify a preferred option proactively locally, rather than risk a national instruction to change. Any business case for change will need to be properly planned and resourced, with considerable engagement included within any scope. This will need to be scoped in due course.

3. Association of Drainage Authorities - Summary

3.1 ADA continues to work effectively on behalf of IDBs and following their role in influencing the additional payments to Councils to help off-set the energy cost impacts on special levies, they have been in negotiation with Defra to secure the Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot (LAPSIP) fund for IDBs. This marks a considerable departure with a new role within government funding administration.

3.2 Flood & Water Live retuned to the ADA calendar and was held in Lincolnshire during July 2023 and the annual conference returns to the Institution of Civil Engineers on 21st November 2023 with a different approach to the day. The AGM aspects has now taken place virtually, so the morning is focussed on stalls and networking, then a buffet lunch ahead of conference session with keynote attendees.

3.3 At the AGM it was confirmed that there would be 6.5% increase in fees for 2024/25 with and in principle same increase for the following two years.

3.4 Locally, Marc Heading continues to Chair the Great Ouse branch and the clerking role of the branch is being transferred from the Middle Level Commissioners to Phil Camamile at the Water Management Alliance on behalf of the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards. John Heading's term as the Gt Ouse branch's Director on the ADA Board ended in June with a replacement still to be confirmed.

3.5 IDBs locally continue to fund an ADA Directorship place on the Board of Water Resources East. With his retirement from the Middle Level Commissioners, David Thomas vacated this role and has been replaced by Giles Bloomfield of the Water Management Alliance.

4. Fens 2100+

4.1 The Environment Agency launched Fens 2100+ with an introductory session for IDB representatives in June 2023. This programme of activity is crucial in informing the medium to long term flood management decision making across the whole Fens as well as framing and driving more tactical and short-term investments.

4.2 The governance for the programme is currently being finalised. Paul Burrows will Chair the 'Asset Managers Steering Group' and through this have a seat on the Programme Board.

4.3 Projects in Fens 2100+

Fens-wide investment framework

- Give the justification to taking a catchment-scale investment approach.
- Explains how the asset managers (and wider partners) will work together across the landscape to determine what investment is needed when.
- In contract with suppliers and scope agreed.
- Underpinning evidence being developed along with communications and engagement plan.

Catchment-scale asset investment plans

- Applies the framework set out above to each catchment to determine the likely investment requirements over the next 30 years.
- Confirms the immediate (2027-2023) asset (and other) investment requirements across each catchment.
- Planning to scope and get suppliers on board in 2024

Catchment-baseline reports

- Provides an overview of each catchment and the current FCRM operational situation and current and future flood risk.
- Explains future asset investment funding challenges.
- Currently scoping contracts with suppliers, aiming to contract in early 2024.

5. Electricity and Insurance inc death in service (NEST)

5.1 The contract for the Middle Level Commissioners and our administrated IDBs' electricity portfolio ends in September 2024. We have been impressed by the brokers of our current service (Green Energy Advice Bureau) however we and the brokers have complaints logged about the standard of service provide by our suppliers Corona Energy.

5.2 We need to plan for our next contract given that there is a notice period. The proposed approach is to bring a small group of the IDB Chairs together with our Assistant Treasurer early in 2024 to start to review options, identify a preferred option and ultimately decide on the next contract.

5.3 To clarify questions raised by Members and IDBs in response to our 2023/24 insurance renewal and personal accident cover for members over 80 years old.

5.4 With the current insurer, the age limit is 75 years of age to benefit from all the personal accident cover:

- Death - £100,000
- Permanent total disability - £100,000
- Permanent Disabling Injuries - £100,000
- Temporary Total Disablement – Weekly amount £200 for 104 weeks (Deferment period 34 weeks)
- Temporary Partial Disablement – Weekly amount £100 for 104 weeks (Deferment period 34 weeks)

5.5 The benefits, as above, will apply to persons above the age of 75 years with the exception of the temporary weekly benefits. This is no way affects the liability cover of the Board, as with all employees & board members, if they are injured as a result of the Board's negligence, then a claim can be considered by them under the main AXA liability insurance.

5.6 In previous years, the personal accident cover only applied to persons up to 75 years of age. For 2023-2024 we requested the policy be extended to persons over 80 years of age. Although we were unable to do this for all benefits, we were able to increase the age for the benefits as mentioned above. The personal accident cover has only been in place since 2017/2018 as it is part of the AXA insurance policy. It was not included in any of the previous insurers' policies.

5.7 Over the last round of board meetings a number of IDBs have asked for re-assessments of their pumping stations for insurance purposes. Having taken stock on these requests, this is not a service we are currently able to offer at the Middle Level Commissioners without procuring what would likely be considerable supplier experience that would then be an additional cost to Boards.

5.8 Appendix 1 explains the rationale with the recommendation that Boards, in determining their valuations for insurance purposes, recognise the limitations associated with their current valuations and the risks they hold of being underinsured.

5.9 In view of the disparity between the benefits attached to the Nest Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Middle Level Commissioners have considered it appropriate to

provide a death in service benefit equivalent to 3 x annual salary to employees enrolled into a NEST Pension Scheme.
The Board is asked to consider whether it also wishes to provide this benefit to its employee.

6. Rating

6.1 On 7th September 2023 we were advised that South Holland IDB and the Water Management Alliance will no longer be supporting DRS operating on local area networks after 31 March 2025. This rating and election management software has been in place for 25 years. DRS is owned by South Holland IDB and was originally developed by this Board around the year 2000, primarily for its own use.

6.2 Since that time, most other IDBs have decided to use DRS under licence and it is therefore their view today that the next rating system should be controlled and developed by ADA, for use by its IDB membership should they want to, given that all but 3 IDBs and 1 IDD in England and Wales now use DRS. ADA have confirmed that they are in positive discussions on this matter.

6.3 This presents a significant risk to the Middle Level Commissioners as well as to the clerking service we provide to our administered IDBs which all rely on this system. However, it also presents an opportunity for an improved systems as we are currently unable to efficiently and optimally use the full capabilities of the system, as it doesn't cater well for dual rated areas and penalties. We have asked to be part of any team scoping any future system and/or system support.

7. Lowland Agricultural Peat

7.1 Led by Robert Caudwell, the Lowland Agricultural Task Force's report was published by Defra in June 2023. The report has a strong focus on the role Internal Drainage Boards could play in supporting and enabling landowners and land-managers. In particular, recommendation three includes:

- Government assessing the legal implications of asking responsible bodies to raise water levels in the interests of preserving peat soil carbon.
- Government considers giving IDBs new powers.

7.2 The Government's response to the Caudwell report recommendation three:
Recommendation 3: Legal protection and powers for managing water for carbon

We agree with recommendation 3 that authorities responsible for water management must have the legal protection and powers to manage water differently to play their part in peat preservation. We will undertake an assessment of the legal implications of asking responsible authorities to raise water levels in the interests of preserving peat soil carbon as we implement the Plan for Water action to streamline our water policy and legal framework. This will inform relevant new powers and any required legislation.

7.3 In response to the report Defra have set up two pilots funds, namely the Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot (LAPSIP) specifically for IDBs and being administered by ADA and the Lowland Agricultural Peat Water Discovery Pilot (LAPWDP) available to IDBs and administered by the Environment Agency.

7.4 The bidding windows for these was in October 2023 with key criteria being project delivery within 2024. The timescales and criteria have made it very challenging for Boards to identify and submit deliverable bids. This alongside capacity constraints within the Middle Level Commissioners have meant we have unfortunately been unable to offer services to IDBs to make the most of this opportunity.

7.5 Fenland SOIL is a not for profit members organisation that aims to inform and develop 'whole farm' land use policies, aimed at achieving climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement in the Fens, and to help establish an agreed set of numbers for GHG emissions for deep, shallow and wasted peat soils. They have a small, dedicated team with farmers at its core to tackle climate issues relating to agriculture and peat in the Fens. They have recently undertaken opportunity mapping assessments across Manea & Welney district and have just started similar covering Upwell district.

7.6 Fenland SOIL currently offer Growers/Farmers and Corporate Membership and are keen to develop an affordable membership offer for IDB Groups. We are working with them to agree a Middle Level Commissioners and administered IDB group membership. Not only is this important to help Boards with their environmental enhancement duties, but it will be crucial if we are to maximise future funding and partnership working opportunities.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Mr Hill referred to the Clerk's proposals to review and refresh the services provided by Middle Level to Internal Drainage Board's to develop a 'Service Catalogue' over the next 12-18 months.

With Regards to reference point 1.3, Mr V Walker considered that in drawing up the original Service Level Agreement there were, and continue to be, a standard level of 'core' services that would be expected to be covered by the Clerk and he would not expect these 'standard' services to now be viewed as 'additional chargeable services'.

The Chairman welcomed the review and to clearly define services. His expectation was to receive an excellent service and that the costs to provide that service should be reflective of that quality which he would be happy to pay. He considers that the level of service had dropped in recent years an he was pleased that the new Clerk was looking to address this.

Mr Hill referred to the development of IDB Key Health Indicators, which would help Board's better understand and proactively address their Key Risks and understand their relative health.
Mr Hill informed Members of the discontinuing support for the DRS software and the Middle Level request to be part of a team to scope any future system.

Mr Hill reported that the Association of Drainage Authorities proposed to increase subscriptions by 6.5% for 2024/2025. Mr Hill confirmed that the subscription for 2024 would be £724.

RESOLVED

That the Board subscribe to the Association of Drainage Authorities for 2024 at the increased cost of £724.

C.1015 Environment Officer's Report

Mr Hill reported that the lack of a written report for this meeting from the Environment Officer was due to her priority being focussed on the Middle level Bank Raising Scheme – he informed Members that part of these works is to put Environmental/Conservation process and procedures in place, which will then subsequently provide benefits to all IDB's. He encouraged the Board to consider appointing an Environmental representative, similar to the Board's Health & Safety representative.

Ms Morris queried if there would need to be an EIA for 'all works', which would therefore cover general routine maintenance works. Mrs Oldfield confirmed that the process would be looking at standard maintenance practices, which would be updated. Ms Morris queried if the maintenance guide would be updated with further requirements. Mrs Oldfield did not consider this to be an additional intention but agreed to follow this up with the Environment Officer.

C.1016 Consulting Engineers Reports

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	**MANEA & WELNEY DDC**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME**
Date:	**Wednesday 10 January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Nicola Oldfield**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Review and approve its Capital Programme taking account of the advice in Section 4.
B. Nominate two representatives to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief for the system study.

1. Overview of services provided to the Board

1.1 The Middle Level Commissioners currently act as Consulting Engineers to the Board providing the following services. These are provided for set fees, hourly rates and/or at cost by the in-house team (capped within our limited capacity and capability) and are supplemented by consultants, contractors and specialist services where necessary.

- Mechanical & Electrical (M&E): Providing general advice, routine maintenance, minor works and inspections. Supporting development of capital works programme.
- Capital works: Advising the Board and undertaking client, project and contract management roles.
- GIS & Survey
- Strategic Planning: Inputs on behalf of the Board to relevant spatial plans (eg Local Plans), flood & water strategies and plans (eg Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans, Fens 2100+)
- Planning and consenting: Responding to Planning Applications and related matters on behalf of the Board and advising on and issuing byelaw consents. A list of the planning, consent and Infiltration Device applications responded to since the last report are provided as Appendix 2.

1.2 Please note that our planning and consenting services currently only have the capacity to be reactive and there is no proactive enforcement service defined and resourced with no allowance made in the Board's budget for such action.

1.3 A Strategic Spatial Planning report will be compiled and published periodically on www.middlelevel.gov.uk and cover the interests of the Middle Level Commissioners and all its administered Boards.

1.4 In order to reduce the cost to the Board and focus limited resources on delivery rather than reporting, the Board has previously resolved to not have a detailed planning report as part of the Consulting Engineer's report. However, this may have governance related implications and does place a burden on the Board's Officers and/or the Clerk's Representative attending the Board Meeting.

1.5 The Middle Level Commissioners intend to refresh the services provided to IDBs by developing a service catalogue that will clarify the full range of services that are offered, along with associated terms and conditions and fee arrangements. This is expected to be developed over the next 12-18 months. Boards will be offered the opportunity to engage in this process to help define the final service offer.

2. Chief Engineer's summary

2.1 The new process for delivering grant-aided schemes is now in progress. As more grant-aided projects come online, the MLC engineers' workload will need to be balanced with additional resources. We are using a number of different external consultants and will be monitoring their performance, using this to inform our future delivery model.

2.2 Storm Babet was a good opportunity to collect additional data about how the catchment responds to rainfall, however resources are always stretched during an event. We will be able to use telemetry data where it exists, but we encourage the Board members to gather evidence in the form of photos or water level marks (where it is safe to do so), and any other information about the system during an event, to feed into the System Study.

2.3 Fen's Reservoir

Anglian Water's Fens Reservoir development work is moving fast. The Middle Level System has a significant role to play in enabling its delivery, with benefits to all parties; there are potentially significant improvements and financial benefit opportunities to secure. It is imperative that MLC staff continue to be closely involved in consultation with Anglian Water's various design and assessment teams to ensure that the reservoir does not have any adverse impacts on the Middle Level System and our ability to continue to manage water for the IDB districts. Therefore, it is likely that MLC staff may be required to join meetings with the Anglian Water team at short notice and this may briefly affect work we are delivering for the Boards. In this event, we will make any necessary arrangements to limit the impacts this may have.

3. Technical Services

3.1 High Rainfall Event and Flooding Incident – December 2020

Further to the last meeting report the Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer has continued to raise concerns about the issues experienced within Cambridgeshire during or following high rainfall and/or exceptional circumstance type events and the apparent lack of action being taken and has enquired of other partners whether given the time that has elapsed any progress is being made to resolve some of the issues.

3.2 Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

The County Council's Flood and Water team are currently in the process of developing a programme of flood risk schemes/works across sixteen locations in Cambridgeshire which are identified in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy as key areas requiring further investigation. To undertake this piece of work the Council has commissioned AtkinsRéalis (SNC-Lavalin Atkins), a multi-disciplinary consultant that provides the County Council's Highways Management Services, who are currently working on the first phase which includes:

- A review of existing information at each of the locations
- Site walkovers
- Gap analysis
- Survey scoping
- Stakeholder analysis
- Concept solution identification

As key partners, the Commissioners' Planning Engineer, together with representatives from other RMAs, recently attended a workshop to identify and discuss any ongoing flood management projects that are being progressed, aspirations and needs for each area, opportunities for partnership working, option constraints, relevant data and general receptiveness to solutions within the areas.

3.3 Summary of Key Planning Issues

New developments and the use of SuDS

As discussed in the last Meeting Report it is considered that there is sufficient evidence that current surface water design practices do not allow for exceptional weather conditions, such as that experienced prior to the December 2020 event which are similar to those being experienced now, Storm Babet (October 2023), or the complex network of water level and flood risk management systems within the Fens. Therefore, consideration is being given to requiring designs to:

1. Incorporate a higher Standard of Protection (SoP), possibly up to 0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) event
2. Include a greater allowance for Climate Change, in excess of 40%, and
3. Be able to “store” water on site for several days until the peak flows have passed.

The introduction of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act may assist particularly if the Commissioners represent the Board on the SuDS Approval Board (SAB) when they are implemented.

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

The Middle Level Commissioners’ Planning Engineer continues to represent the Board/Commissioners on the Stakeholder Group and associated engagement with the relevant interested parties.

Following a change of the EA’s Project Manager the once regular Update Meetings have become less frequent, but work continues on this long-term Strategy.

The EA’s consultant, Mott MacDonald, has been undertaking Optioneering Work concerning the provision and operation of the storage facilities within the Block Fen area of Sutton and Mepal IDB.

The EA has offered to give an update presentation to the Board and this is being discussed with the Board’s Chair.

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

The contents of item (iii) of Minute C.998 Consulting Engineers Report are noted and is one of several related issues to be discussed with Anglian Water. However, the DWMP and Water Recycling Growth Manager has moved roles and it is understood that the new DWMP lead will not be appointed until the New Year.

However, any meaningful evidence to support the Commissioners’ concerns, however anecdotal, would be beneficial.

4. Capital Programme

4.1 The Boards’ Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1.

4.2 In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GIA) from the Environment Agency, there is an allocation to undertake a System Study to identify any improvements needed in the system. This is currently programmed for 2023/24 and will include channel surveys, structural condition assessments of pumping stations and other assets, hydraulic modelling, economic and environmental assessments, and development of recommendations/solutions with the aim of securing further grant for the delivery of those solutions. The Study will also include consideration of the potential impacts of works arising from the EA’s Cranbrook Counter Drain FRM Strategy.

4.3 For the Manea & Welney IDB System Study, we have drafted a Project Initiation Form (PIF) for approval by the Board, included as Appendix 3. This briefly describes the perceived problem, aims and objectives of the Study and will be used to provide a scope of work for appointing consultants. I will contact the Chair to arrange a meeting to review and finalise the PIF ahead of appointing consultants to work on the Study. I hope that the Board representatives will work closely with the appointed project team to enable the consultants to undertake a meaningful assessment of the district and, ultimately, provide suitable recommendations for future management.

The Board is asked to nominate two representatives to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief in due course.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Programme
Appendix 2: List of applications responded to since last meeting
Appendix 3: Project Initiation Form (PIF)

Appendix 1

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners														
Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)		**PREVIOUS YEARS**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**	**FUTURE YEARS**	**ALL YEARS**
		Pre Yr 0	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**	**Year 7**	**Year 8**	**Year 9**	**Year 10**	**Post Year 10**	**Total Expenditure**
Glenhouse p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	0.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2000.0
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Purls Bridge p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	0.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	John Deere Tractor - *purchased April 2020 - £111,480*	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	85.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	85.0
	Herder Cavalier Flail Mower - *purchased June 2020 - £71,100*	4	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	65.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	69.0
	Citroen van - *purchased 13/03/2015 - £8,753*	0	0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0
Drainage Channels		0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		4	**0**	**15**	**1,070**	**1,000**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**150**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**2,254**

Appendix 2

The following planning applications have been responded to since the last meeting:

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
667	F/YR23/0373/PIP	Risley Family	Residential (Up to 9 dwellings)	Station Road, Manea
668	F/YR23/0462/F	A C Building (Peterborough) Ltd	Residential (2 dwellings)	Westfield Road, Manea
669	F/YR23/0532/PNC04	George Heys Farming Ltd	Change of use: Agricultural Residence (2 dwellings)	Station Road, Manea
670	F/YR23/0639/F	Mr & Mrs M Minns	Residence (Extension with carport below)	Valentine Close, Manea
671	F/YR23/0785/F	Mr & Mrs Khan	Residence (Extension)	Station Road, Manea
672	F/YR23/0878/F	Mr D Goodwin	Residence (Annexe)	Scholars Close, Manea
673	CCC/23/124/FUL	CCC	Education (Removal of mobile classroom, proposed new teaching wing, extensions to hall and pre-school, and external works, including a hardstanding playground)	Manea Community Primary School, Station Road, Manea
674	F/YR23/0881/O	Mr R Hirson	Residential (Up to 4 dwellings)	Station Road Manea
675	F/YR23/0888/F	Mr & Mrs A Cooke	Residence (Garage/garden room)	Station Road, Manea
676	F/YR23/0939/PIP	Mr M Goude	Residential (Up to 5 dwellings)	Fallow Corner Drove, Manea
677	F/YR23/0979/F	Mr & Mrs Barrett	Residence	Purls Bridge Drove, Manea

The following application for Byelaw Consent (works in and around watercourses) has been granted since the last report:

Consent No	Description of Works	Date consent granted
Mwe/BC/33	Reinstatement of a boundary fence within the Commissioners' 9 metre Byelaw strip	17/10/23

The following applications for Byelaw Consent (for discharge) have been granted since the last report:

Consent No	Description of Works/Location	Date consent granted
DC/15	Discharge of treated effluent via Anglian Water treatment works at Fallow Corner Drove, Manea	26/6/23
DC/16	Discharge of surface water & treated effluent at Fallow Corner Drove, Manea	27/7/23

There have been no Infiltration Device applications since the last meeting.

Project Initiation Form

Board name	Manea & Welney DDC
Project name	System Study
Project no.	[To be inserted by Consulting Engineer]
Doc Ref.	[To be inserted by Consulting Engineer]
Report/MA reference	Consulting Engineer report in Board minutes 8th Feb 2023

Description of requirements

Project details			
Description of the problem			
Glenhouse PS – pump refurbishment and possible electrification of pumps. Purls Bridge PS – pump overhaul required. Study to assess electrification v. other fuel types. Include minor works to cleanse drain under railway bridge.			
Timescales/Priority	Study start 2023/4; Works in 2025/6		
Dependencies			
Grant-in-Aid application to be progressed as priority (MA Feb 2022 & 2023) The pumps to be replaced with fish friendly pumps which cost in the region of £120,000 for submersible options and £200,000 for suspended bowl type pumps. In addition, a new control panel will be required along with a suitable building to house it in.			
Constraints			
The pumps to be replaced with fish friendly pumps.			
Governance and key contacts			
Delegated Board Member	[Who the Board has delegated decision making to and who is the Board's key contact]		
Date of delegation	[Date/meeting]		
MLC Engineer			
Reporting requirements			
Frequency of reports	[e.g. monthly update to the Chairman]		
Process	[e.g. By phone/email/Highlight Report]		
Tolerances	[e.g. notify key contact if cost increases by 20%/delay of 6 months]		
Benefits and funding [To be inserted by Consulting Engineer]			
Budget estimate	Study: £50k; Works arising: £1,500,000		
Anticipated Outcome Measures (OM2)	12	Potential GiA (%)	[From PF calc (revision)]
Funding source	FDGiA		

Approvals

No work is to proceed until the Chief Engineer has confirmed availability of resources/proposed timescales and Board approvals have been received below:

Name	Title	Signature	Date
	Chief Engineer		
	Delegated Board Member		

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	**MANEA & WELNEY DDC**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**
Date:	**Wednesday 10 January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Dave Bantoft**

1. M&E key messages and advice

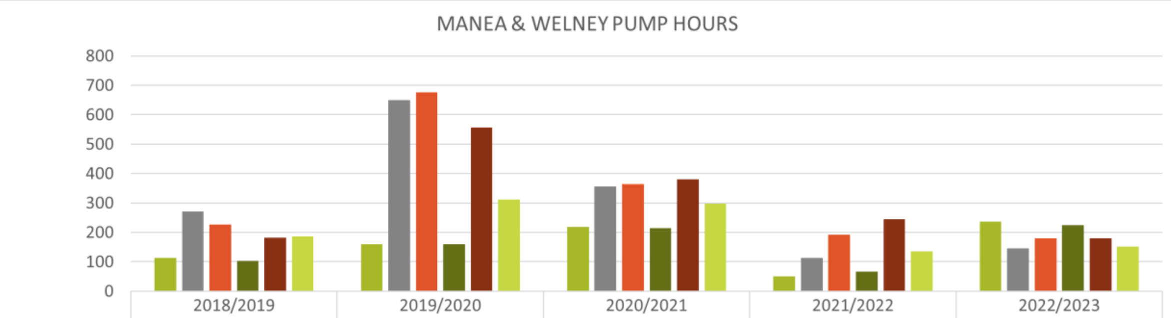
1.1 Other than the matters described below or previously reported, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at each of the stations is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition. The stations, pumps and control panels are at an age where reliability is a concern, this will be addressed in the upcoming System Study.

1.2 **Purls Bridge**

The insulation resistance of pump 1 had deteriorated (12Mohm), this pump has been set to duty through this pumping season and the resistance has improved considerably (318Mohm). This shows there may be moisture ingress into the pump which has improved with the heat of regular running. This will continue to be monitored. It should be run regularly to help prevent the ingress of water. This pump was last overhauled in 2015. Overhauling this unit again is not recommended as due to its age it is unlikely to be viable or reliable. The insulation resistance of the pump deteriorated slowly over several years before the last overhaul and may do again but its reliability is a concern. Bedford pumps have been asked to quote a suitable replacement.

Weedscreen hydraulic hose reel failed and was replaced with overhauled unit during December.

2. Pumping summary



	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
GH PUMP 1	113	159	219	50	236
GH PUMP 2	270	650	356	112	146
GH PUMP 3	226	675	363	191	180
GH PUMP 4	102	159	213	66	225
PB PUMP 1	182	556	379	244	180
PB PUMP 2	185	311	298	135	152

3. Inspections

3.1 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out during September 2023.

3.2 ElCR Test and Due dates as below.

Manea & Welney	Glenhouse	12-Nov-2020	12-Nov-2025
Manea & Welney	Purls Br	12-Nov-2020	12-Nov-2025

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

Mrs Oldfield informed members that it was useful for any data available concerning the operation of the district system during rainfall events to be collected, which could be used to feed into future studies, and requested members to forward any information, photographs etc concerning this.

The Chairman referred to works carried out in the village by the Commissioners to alleviate issues during rainfall events and Mr C Marks thanked the Commissioners for these works, which were very much appreciated and asked that thanks be passed onto the District Superintendent for all the support he had given.

Ms Morris referred to the comments from the finance committee that when these works were carried out thy should be reported to the local parish council, to ensure they are aware of the support given by the Commissioners.

Mr C Marks referred to areas of restrictions by culverts and that Fenland District Council were currently looking at areas of poor maintenance and restrictions in the village area. The Chairman referred to the high levels of water for 24 – 36 hours which had caused issues at pinch points in the system, but beyond that the district system operated well.

The Chairman referred to SuDS and proposals for attenuation, which he considered current design practises do not allow for exceptional weather conditions, and in these, systems become overwhelmed. He considered that design parameters needed to be updated to take into account changing weather patterns.

With regards to planning, Mr Marks reported that Fenland District Council had identified IDB comment into the planning process as an area of concern and that they were looking to identify any implications within board's 9m byelaw strip but stressed it was imperative for the planning officers to receive comments from the boards, as without these, they were unable to raise concerns/issues.

Mrs Oldfield reported that reports were awaited from Anglian Water concerning the Manea Lots STW, which would then allow further discussions. The Chairman referred to ongoing issues with the STW an that the massive increase in housing had not been aligned with an increase in investment to upgrade AW facilities – he considered a major factor in this was the restriction placed on water authorities to raise funding in invest in their infrastructure.

Mr V Walker referred to the district study and queried if it would extend to areas outside of the district, particularly referring to discharges from the board and flows in the tidal river, which are restricted by siltation.

Mrs Oldfield confirmed that the Environment Agency were carrying out a study on the tidal river and the impact siltation has on discharges. The Chairman referred to technology available to monitor bed levels, which could improve the situation. Mrs Oldfield referred to the district study, which would identify areas to be addressed and then give access to potential grant-in-aid funding for any proposed schemes. She referred to the Capital Programme, which would b updated following the conclusion of the study. She confirmed that she was looking to submit an application for the study, which would be carried out in parallel with Upwell IDB study, and that the costs for the study would be fully funding by grants.

The Chairman reported that proposals to upgrade Glenhouse Pumping Station had been proposed some 5 years ago and he was disappointed that it had taken so long to reach this stage, however, it may be that advances and changes during this period could be beneficial to the Commissioners upgrade proposals. He referred to any proposals, which he considered needed to take into account power generation costs, the Commissioners meeting their Environmental requirements. Members discussed alternative power sources and the Chairman considered that it may now be beneficial to electrify two pumps and convert the other two diesel engines to run on alternative fuel.

Mr M Fairey considered any proposals to electrify pumps at Glenhouse would require back-up generators which should be included in any proposal.

In response to queries raised by members, Mrs Oldfield confirmed that the study would look at all the implications of climate change, government proposals for farming and the Environment Agency Cranbrook Study and that these would be taken into account for any proposals.

The Chairman reported that it was the recommendation of the finance committee that the works van is not replaced this year and that it be reviewed further by the committee next year.

The Chairman raised concerns that in the past, the Commissioners had relied on the Middle Level for all their engineering requirements and it now appeared that they would be more and more reliant on external consultants.

Mrs Oldfield confirmed that there was likely to be in excess of 20 IDB grant-in-aid proposals and the current staffing levels were not sufficient to service this demand. She confirmed that any consultants will be managed by Middle Level employees and hoped that boards would engage in the process of appointing consultants.

RESOLVED

i) That the report and actions referred therein be approved
ii) That the Capital Improvement Programmes be approved in principal and be updated as more information becomes available with regards to the improvement scheme at Glenhouse Pumping Station
iii) That Mr R Sears, Mr M Fairey and Mr M Heading be the authorised representatives to work with the consulting engineer to propose a project brief or the Manea & Welney district study.

C.1017 Maintenance Works in the District

The Chairman reported that the majority of works last year had been completed in accordance with the Commissioners maintenance policy and it was intended to carry out works for the coming year inline with the programme again.
He reported that he considered the watercourses were in good order and requested if any members had concerns over any sections of the district system, that they should contact him.

RESOLVED

To continue with the Commissioner’ annual maintenance programme in 2024/25.

C.1018 Health & Safety

The Chairman reported that Cope Safety Management had a planned visit on 15th February 2024 and that all matters previously discussed with Cope had been attended to.

C.1019 District Superintendents Report
Viz;

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners Superintendent's Report

2023, ten years since I started work with the Board. I really am not sure where that time has gone, but we can’t get it back, so onward for the next ten.

As I write this report in early December, 2023 has already become the wettest year of those ten years. March 107mm, September 96mm, October 132mm and November 83mm are all the wettest for each of those months too. February was the driest month with only 10mm, which made it the fifth driest month on record.

With a dry February, and the difficulties of 2022 fresh in my mind, the pumps were switched off between February 7th and March 10th. The drain levels had risen to about 20cm short of our usual summer levels and the wetter weather in March meant the pumps could come back on to trim the level where it was, or so I thought. March 10th played a nasty hand, it rained, which quickly turned to sleet and then to wet snow, lots of wet snow. Driving through the District, visibility was down to about 50 metres and the snow, horizontal in the face of a strong wind, quickly turned the landscape white, and yet by 4pm the sun was out and the snow was gone. The main drain rose by 21cm at Glen House in the space of around two hours and by midday, all four pumps were running and pumping carried on, albeit on a much reduced scale until May 23rd, by which time summer levels had been achieved, and the drain was holding steady.
Autumn draw down prior to the 360 arriving began on August 29th, a very slow, steady draw down prevented any fish kill and the drains were down to the maintenance level in advance of the machine arriving on September 19th.

Over the course of the year 27.7km of drain has been flailed at least once, most of it four times. In addition, 8.5km were cut with the reed bucket and 5km of non District water courses were flailed for Manea PC and other ratepayers. The 360 slubbed 15km of District drain.

My preparatory work with mowing and reed cutting, allowed the 360 to make good progress, and despite having some areas with very heavy cot build ups, the contractor was through the main part of the District and finished beyond Purls Bridge by October 19th.
The evening of the 19th turned wet, and by the morning of October 22nd, rain amounting to 83.5mm had fallen. By keeping the drain at the very low maintenance level, and getting all the pumps running as required, we were able to manage the very high flows into the District

accordingly. Between October 20th and 24th, 259 pumping hours were recorded between both stations, amounting to 1,312,560 tonnes of water pumped into the Old Bedford River. With Sutton & Mepal and Upwell Districts both going hammer and tongs, it is little wonder that the OBR rose to a level 1.58m from 1.16m, the highest I have ever seen it.

The District plant and machinery has been generally reliable throughout the year.

The John Deere has needed no more than servicing, and is currently averaging 10.1 litres/hour of diesel.
The Herder has only had a couple of minor hose replacements on the main part of the machine. A couple of hoses were replaced on the flail head, and it will need roller bearings replacing during the coming winter. This will be the first set of roller bearings in four years, the Bomford would get through at least two sets each season. The mowing bucket required some knives to be replaced, and again are the first replacements since purchase.
The Citroen Berlingo has suffered a couple of punctures, but at the time of writing is at LWVS to have the front suspension and wheel bearings overhauled as I am quite sure the van shouldn't sound like a tube train when driving.

Other than keeping an eye on the oil and water levels, and seasonal greasing of the gearboxes, Glen House pumps remain generally reliable. Minor niggles have caused the odd stoppage, the two remaining mains powered battery chargers have been replaced, a couple of radiator level sensors, a broken fuel feed spring, a broken wire on a tachometer feed and finally a stuck starter motor. The weedscreen cleaner has been reliable, but monitoring of the hose tension pays dividends and if possible, I switch it off when windy weather is forecast to save hose damage. All of the above repairs were dealt with by myself.

The Purls Bridge pumps have carried on giving good reliable service. There was a concern voiced by the MLC engineer about moisture levels in the windings of No1 set, and accordingly I have used that pump as the duty pump so far this year, with the intention of reducing the moisture by heat generated from more constant use. At the time of writing the MLC engineers are due to visit and replace the Tec Reel hose unit with an exchange unit, ours has suffered a return spring failure. This is not a 'nip up a ladder' for me, as it is very definitely a two man job.

In November, we attended a meeting held by the EA to review and discuss the arrangements for summer management of the Old Bedford River. As in previous years, we highlighted the need to raise the level in the river sooner, and to a higher level, rather than just relying on transfers into the river via the Old Bedford Sluice at Salters Lode. We will watch to see if there will be much change in the EA operation for 2024. Over the past summer, I was only required to carry out transfers at Salters Lode twice, a great improvement over 2022.

Later in November we were also present at a meeting organised by Charlie Marks for Manea PC, along with CCC Highways and Anglian Water, to try and address the issues causing localised flooding in the village during heavy rainfall events. While none of the issues were within the scope of the District Commissioners operations, it was felt we might be able to offer some help. In the event we were able to agree to flail and slub out a drain which runs from Station Road, behind Festival Close and round to the AW sewage plant. This was carried out and finished within a week of the meeting. How quickly CCC and AW carry out the works they promised remains to be seen.

The District has seen a good amount of the usual species of waterfowl, fish, mammals, birds and reptiles during the year.
Water Voles are present across the District as a whole, and the number of breeding species is stable with Mallard, Tufted Duck, Teal, Coot, Gadwall, Moorhen all being observed with little effort.
Roach and Rudd are present in the water courses in large numbers, attracting Heron and Cormorant. I have also seen Perch and Bream at various times, along with Pike, all in good health.
A single Mink was trapped on March 10th, the first for over a year, and no more have been seen. There are breeding Otters in the Delph opposite Glen House, so they will discourage Mink.
Hunting Barn Owls were present during most of the year, but I have not seen any since the weather turned cold and wet. These conditions are notoriously difficult for Barn Owls, which lead a fairly precarious existence if they cannot hunt on a regular basis. Kestrels have been following the flail mower all year, taking advantage of each fresh cut to expose their prey.
I never did find where the Garganey pair which were at Glen House in the spring went to breed, probably they hopped over the bank onto the Washes.

With only a few small areas left to visit with the tractor, once again I am confident the District is in good order for the year to come, with water courses and equipment ready to accept whatever the weather throws at us. As usual I must thank our Chairman for his support and encouragement over the past twelve months and look forward to some warmer, drier weather in the spring.

The Chairman referred to the District Superintendents report and considered he was doing an excellent job in challenging conditions. He reported that rainfall was recorded every day and currently there was 857mm of rainfall recorded, which was approximately 50% more than an average year.
In response to Mr Walker, the Chairman confirmed that the superintendent was equipped for lone working with notification procedures in place and the use of the 'What Three Words' app. Mr C Barnes reported that he would be happy to be listed as a contact if needed.
Mr Crofts considered the District Superintendents report to be the most comprehensive he has seen and the Superintendent should be thanked for both the quality of his works in the district and also of his reports.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

i) That the report and actions therein be approved.
ii) That the Chairman thank the Superintendent for the quality of his report and for his service over the preceding year.

C.1020 Finance Report – Looking Back

Payments

The Commissioners considered and approved payments amounting to £193,934.69 which had been made during the period from 1st April to 30th November 2023, viz;

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Payments 2023/2024 (1st April 2023 - 30th November 2023)

Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)		1,110.83
Middle Level Commissioners - Road tax for AU15 XHB		290.00
Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety Re-charge 2022-2023 (Account from COPE Safety Management)		427.20
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Travelling		8,817.19
Middle Level Commissioners - Installation of telemetry at pumping stations (net of 50% grant-in-aid)		6,476.16
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		13.06
Ratatak - Pest control (April - June 2023)		90.40
Wave - Metered water supply		33.52
Environment Agency - Precept		39,553.52
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		14.72
Water Resources East - Contribution to operating costs 2023-2024		150.00
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Supply, fit and balance tyre		100.44
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance		270.31
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		15.92
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Supply alternator belt		24.82
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		15.92
Ratatak - Pest control (July - September 2023)		90.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Expenses in connection with Board meeting		250.00
Upwell Internal Drainage Board - Shared costs of maintenance works carried out to the Old Croft River		13,884.23
Wave - Metered water supply		38.70
Ben Burgess Coates - 2250 hour service of John Deere Tractor - AO20 NWL		968.99
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		14.82
N L Hydraulics - Hydraulic pipe and fittings		53.66
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Purls Bridge pumping station)	1,635.36	
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Purls Bridge pumping station)	1,319.76	2,955.12
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Glenhouse pumping station)	553.25	
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Glenhouse pumping station)	206.78	760.03
N L Hydraulics - Hydraulic pipe and fittings		51.06
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		15.37
Mastenbroek - Knife, screws, locknuts and rivet		210.12
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2022-2023 accounts)		756.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, attendance at meeting, planning and development applications)		1,364.10
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2022-2023 accounts)		984.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges		7,821.90
N L Hydraulics - Hydraulic pipe and fittings		64.80
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Glenhouse pumping station)		212.84
Ratatak - Pest control (October - December 2023)		90.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances		4,019.97
Wave - Metered water supply		21.08
Vodafone - Mobile telephone charges		15.18
Fen Group - Drain maintenance		11,694.00
FJS Services Ltd - Washers, nuts and bolts		8.96
Environment Agency - Precept		39,553.51
Borough of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Council - Refund of overpayment of special levy		11,612.50
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Glenhouse pumping station)		364.61
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Purls Bridge pumping station)		156.57
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (Purls Bridge pumping station)		210.47
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (Glenhouse pumping station)		0.00
Anglia Farmers - Electricity data collection charges - (Purls Bridge pumping station)		0.00
Anglia Farmers - Road diesel		312.79
Anglia Farmers - Gas oil		11,904.43
Anglia Farmers - Repairs		43.47
District labour		22,552.36
NEST Pension Contributions		3,474.24
		193,934.69

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

NB - The Chairman, Mr M Heading and Cllr C Crofts declared interest (as members of the Middle Level Board) in the payments made to the Middle Level Commissioners.
NB – Cllr C Crofts and Mr R Gladwin declared interests (as members of Upwell IDB) in the payments made to Upwell IDB.

NB- Cllr C Crofts declared an interest (as a Councillor) in the payment made to Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk.

C.1021 Finance – Looking Forward

Fees, Remuneration and Subscriptions

ADA

Mr Hill reported that ADA has increased subscriptions by 6.5% for 2024. The subscription for 2023 was £679 and will be £724 for 2024.

RESOLVED

That the increased subscription be paid for 2024.

Water Resources East

Mr Hill reported that WRE have indicated that their subscription for 2024 would be £150.00, an increase of £25.00 on the previous year.

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners subscribe to WRE at the requested contribution of £150.00.

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

The Clerk will report that following his submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £8.33 (£688.71 less £680.38 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency for the financial year 2022/2023 based on the Board's actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year and the sum of £865.43 in respect of 80% of the Board's estimated expenditure for the financial year 2023/2024.

District Superintendents Remuneration

The Chairman reported that the District Superintendent enjoys his works and that he considers he does an excellent job. He reminded members that his wages had previously been increased to a level commensurate with his experience and responsibilities and that subsequent increases would be inflationary allowances only. Mr Hill reported that last year's increase was 5.6%.

Mr Hill reported on the death in service provision for the Middle Level Commissioners employees in the NEST pension scheme as reported in the Clerks report, and that the insurers had confirmed

that this would be available to the administered IDB's with employees in the NEST pension scheme. He informed members that the benefit was a payment of three times the annual salary and from the premium paid by the Middle Level estimated that the cost to the Commissioners would be between £150 and £200 per annum.
Mr Hill reported that the Commissioners had previously agreed to match the employees' pension contributions up to a maximum of 10% and that currently the contributions being paid were employee 11%, employer 10%.
The Chairman reported that he has not yet discussed matter with the Superintendent and that it was the recommendation of the finance committee that he be authorised to review a pay award with the District Superintendent during March.

RESOLVED

i) That the Chairman be authorised to discuss a pay award with the District Superintendent and to make any arrangements concerning the pay of the superintendent as he considers appropriate.
ii) That the Commissioners provide the death in service benefit for the District Superintendent as referred to.
iii) That the Commissioners pension contributions arrangements remain unchanged.

Development Contributions

Mr Hill reported that Contributions from Developers had been received.

Precept to the Environment Agency

Mr Hill reported that the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee determined that there were exceptional circumstances to consider on the agreed 2% increase on Precepts on Internal Drainage Boards. The Committee voted for an additional 1% increase (reflecting exceptional circumstances) above the agreed 2% for the year ending 31st March 2025 – total of a 3% increase on the level of precept on internal Drainage Boards for the year ending 31st March 2025.

Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Commissioners 2022/2023.

a) The Commissioners considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on 31st March 2023, viz;

Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023

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

1 The Audit of accounts for the Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners for the year ended 31st March 2023 has been completed and the accounts have been published.

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

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

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Commissioners

Date of Announcement: 8th September 2023

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, 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 2022/23 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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

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

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 12/06/2023 18/06/2023 19/06/2023

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

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: P. BEECH – WHITINGS LLP

Date: 19/06/2023

***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 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

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

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

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

08/06/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

C.1005

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

Chairman John E Heading

Clerk [signature]

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	417,132	419,586	*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	194,563	205,552	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	3,384	13,338	*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	34,013	40,156	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	161,480	151,423	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	419,586	446,897	*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	454,922	490,272	*The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – **To agree with bank reconciliation.***
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	2,611,078	2,611,078	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

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

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 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 27th May 2023

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

8th June 2023

as recorded in minute reference:

C. 1007.

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

John E Heading

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Manea and Welney District Drainage Comissioners – DB0046**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

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 2022/23

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 2023.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature: PKF Littlejohn LLP — Date: 01/09/2023

b) The Commissioners considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2023, viz;

Whitings
Chartered Accountants LLP
Fenland House, 15 B Hostmoor Avenue
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AX
t: 01354 652304
e: march@whitingsllp.co.uk
w: whitingsllp.co.uk

BB/MM053
30 June 2023

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

Dear Messrs. P Burrows, R. Hill, and S Ablett,

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2022-2023

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 2023, 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 – mainly for residential properties**

   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. It should be noted that this is largely in relation to residential property. Should a complete rebuild following an unforeseen catastrophic event be required, current valuations may no longer be appropriate given today's prices which may lead to a shortfall in funds which would have to be drawn out of surplus funds if other financial arrangements were not available.

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.

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. We are recommending that Boards should look to index link valuations and we will be asking all Boards again to consider this at subsequent meetings, along with consideration of current valuations. Valuation of residential property is an area we have focussed on for the 2023 meetings.

A number of Boards have recognised the potential impact of increased costs on valuations and have taking steps to re-value, however, the consulting engineer is currently reviewing the methodology for valuation of pumping stations, to ensure there is a robust process, which will be then used going forward.

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

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.

With regards to other employee benefits, we note that where applicable these are being recognised as benefits in kind and disclosed on the P11d, we would encourage the value of these benefits to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that these are reflective of what the employee receives, especially where some boards providing the living accommodation to their employees.

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.

The benefit charge for living accommodation is calculated in accordance with HMRC recommended valuations. We are looking at payrolling any standard benefits but are currently unable to do this for accommodation and use of vehicles.

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 Chairperson of each individual board be given the 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 in light of any unforeseen significant variances arising.

The budgets that have been set for 2023/24 year may need to be increased throughout the year due to the significant cost increases that are largely 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 having peaked at a 40 year high within the last 12 months, 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. We note that some of IDBs decided to switch from the business premium bank account to business current bank account, these accounts no longer earn interest but are free from bank charges and fees. 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:

A brief summary of treasury management:

There are 30 separate authorities administered through the Middle Level offices, all of which are required to maintain their own banking arrangements, we do look at bulk/group arrangements to do this and it is a requirement that all boards are treated the same. In the past it was found that there was a lot of staff time being spent in investment transfers and following discussions with the bank it was decided that for ease of operation all balances would be treated the same and the bank would offer a competitive interest rate and free banking. To do this all boards had a "client premium" account. This is the type of account operated by businesses looking after clients' money (solicitors etc). They are generally specific accounts in the name of the business but it is for "third party monies."

Our arrangement worked fine until the (first) crash around 2008 – at this time interest rates plummeted below our arrangement rate – specifically, under the terms of the arrangement we could have been required to pay the bank for looking after our money. The arrangement was changed to retain free banking, but as with all accounts interest was minimal.

During last financial year our bankers started taking more of an interest in the number of client premium accounts they had across the country and were surprised with the number held in March. The use of such accounts is for very specific purposes which we as an organisation do not qualify and alarm bells were ringing with the bank that they were operating outside of all banking standards/regulations. We were notified that as a result of this the accounts would need to be closed and other accounts opened. This would involve a basic current account and an interest bearing second account – transfers to be made between the two for cash flow purposes. We made the bank aware of our concerns about transferring accounts with regards to the payment of direct debits and the collection of rates by direct debit, payment by ratepayers etc for which our account details were with many suppliers/customers and we did not want to go down the route of having payments/receipts rejected and details having to be re-registered with all parties.

While this was being put in place we had a general increase in interest rates but as previously advised we now have started to rationalise the arrangements – there will be some fine tuning required but currently the process is a standard current account for normal payments/receipts and an interest-bearing account. Additionally, balances can be transferred for deposit/investment.

We are currently making treasury deposits for individual Boards but need to manage this with specific cash flow requirements while also making consideration to having balances available for potential event situations requiring immediate cash. We will be monitoring additional staff time required to manage this while discussing matters further with our bankers.

6. **Rental of Land**

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

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

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

7. **Financial Regulations**

We noted that the last update and approve of Financial Regulations for all boards was in 2013 with the next review in 2023. However due the recent retirement of Chief Executive and the joint of new Chief Executive/Clerk in February 2023, the review of Financial Regulations has not been completed by the financial year under review. We have been informed that the new Chief Executive and Treasurer are aware of these requirements and the Financial Regulations are due to be updated by the end of this year, we look forward to reviewing this in due course.

Client comments:
There is a full review of the provision of clerking services and will be, as has been mentioned looking at reviewing these regulations towards the end of 2023 with a view to then having them updated by the Boards.

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:
For the 2023 meeting the Board approved an insured value of £701,500 and for this to be index linked.

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	£52,324.26
Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Creditor	£52,436.95
Difference	**£112.69**

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.

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 suggest that meetings and account preparation periods be brought into line, if possible, to eradicate 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.

Hundred of Wisbech

During the course of our audit, we noted that the 2021/22 accounts and payment list had not been published on the website, we are pleased to note that following notification of this fact the accounts and payment list were 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.

We also notice that the statement of NS & I accounts shows the name and the address of old Chief Executive who is retired in February 2023. We understand that this matter will be brought to the attention of the board on the next general meeting to approve the changes in signatory.

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.

Your comment is noted and procedures are being amended concerning this for the future.

Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB

During our review it was noted that the actual wages increase of the employee during the year has exceeded the increase authorised by the board during the meeting. We understand that it was an isolated error and understand that this matter will be brought to the attention of the board during the next general meeting. The overall error is equal to 0.50% of the total expenditures and will be adjusted next year. We understand that the internal process is being reviewed and address to ensure that this scenario doesn't arise again in the future.

Client comment:
This administration error was reviewed by the Board at their 2023 meeting and the relevant adjustment is being made through the 2023 payroll process. We have looked at our internal processes and made appropriate adjustments to mitigate future risk.

March 3rd IDB

Whilst the board are using the budget setting process to determine the rates set on an annual basis, we note that the rates had been the same for the last 5 years. In a view of the capital improvement program – the plans for the pumping station replacement in 2026/27, the current rate of inflation and the fact that rates have been increased across other boards under the administration of the Middle Level Commissioners, we would recommend that the rates raised be reviewed and uplifted as necessary to take account of the factors outlined above.

Client comment:
The points raised are made to the Commissioners when setting the rate but there it is the appointed members who have been against rate increases, indicating that the council will address any shortfall in the following year should this be the case. This is a situation that has occurred on other Boards for the setting of the 2023/2024 rates and levies.

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

Expenditure estimated and Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2024/2025

The Board were informed by the Clerk that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 71.73% and 28.27%, viz;

MANEA & WELNEY DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
Rating Estimates 2024/2025

	Approved Estimates 2023/2024	Probable Actual 2023/2024	Estimated 2024/2025	Estimated 2025/2026	Estimated 2026/2027
1 CHANNEL MAINTENANCE	18,500	17,000	18,500	18,500	19,000
2 LABOUR	43,500	42,500	44,250	45,500	47,000
3 REPAIRS AND RENEWALS	10,500	10,000	10,500	10,500	10,500
Pump overhaul	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
4 FUEL	33,000	33,000	33,000	33,000	33,000
5 RATES, INSURANCES & TELEPHONES	3,500	4,250	4,500	4,750	5,000
6 ADMINISTRATION	17,775	17,775	18,750	19,000	19,250
7 TECHNICAL SERVICES	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
8 E. A. PRECEPT	79,150	79,107	81,480	83,925	86,450
9 PLANT REPLACEMENT	0	0	10,000	10,000	10,000
	223,925	**221,632**	**238,980**	**243,175**	**248,200**
INCOME	**835**	**3,132**	**3,862**	2,000	2,000
Net Expenditure	**223,090**	**218,500**	**235,118**	**241,175**	**246,200**
Rate Requirement	**0.4700**		**0.4934**	**0.5055**	**0.5160**
Increase on previous year budget			**4.98%**	**2.44%**	**2.08%**

AV 477,147

Gen. Fund balance open		260,230	265,698	
Rates raised	*Rate set - 47.00*	223,967	235,118	0.4934 p
net expenditure		218,500	235,118	
closing balance		**265,698**	**265,698**	

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Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners

Rate and levy requirements

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2024/2025 is:-

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

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

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

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

In 2024/2025 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £4,765.

Estimated revenue cash balance in hand at 31st March 2024 - £260,000

The estimated net expenditure for the Commissioners Revenue and Capital Programmes in 2024/2025 is £235,118 and equivalent to:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 49.34p and

b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £42,159
a Special levy on Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk of £24,381

In 2023/2024 a rate of 47.00 in the £ was set, together with Special levies of £40,160 on Fenland District Council and £23,225 on Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk to raise £205,435.

The Commissioners should give consideration to the future level of balances required when setting the rate for 2024/2025.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Commissioners

December 2023

The Chairman reported that the finance committee had discussed the rate requirement in detail and it was their recommendation that an additional £5,000 should be added for fuel costs and that the rate for 2024/2025 should be set at 50.0p

RESOLVED

a) That £5,000 be added to the rate estimates for 2024/2025

b) Drainage rates:

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £238,263 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £170,832 and £67,431 respectively.

iv) That a rate of 50.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That a Special levy of £42,723 be made and issued to Fenland District Council & £24,708 to BCKLWN for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.

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

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

C.1022 Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman enquired if the Commissioners considered there was value in a District Inspection. members were in favour of an inspection and were happy to leave the arrangements with the Chairman. The Chairman reported that he would need to liaise with the engineers to ensure relevant staff members were available.

Resolved

i) The Chairman be authorised to liaise with the consultant engineer to arrange an inspection for the summer meeting.

ii) When a suitable date has been agreed the Chairman will inform the Clerk who would send notification to all members.

C.1023 Any Other Business

The Chairman reported that he had arranged for Gary Roberts, Consultant Engineer to attend the meeting to give a presentation on the Environment Agency Counter Drain/Old Bedford proposals. However, unfortunately Gary was now unable to attend.

The Chairman informed members that it was his understanding that the Environment agency were looking at proposals for the future use of the Old Bedford River, the Counter Drain and Welches Dam Pumping Station and any proposals would also need to take into account WLMP's and environment requirements.

He reported on the current use of alternative fuel at Welches Dam Pumping Station and the use of redundant gravel pits for storage when the Pumping Station reaches the end of its useful working life.

He did not consider the case for decommissioning Welches Dam Pumping Station was convincing Mrs Oldfield referred to the project being part of a larger scheme for the re-instatement of the Block Fen area, with wetland habitat areas. She considered that the current proposals for a Fenland Reservoir could affect the proposals. She reported that as part of the Manea & Welney system study, the Old Bedford/Counter Drain proposals would need to be taken into account and referred to issues concerning gravity drainage into the tidal river which was also being investigated by the Environment Agency. The Chairman reported that it was considered that with every tide 80% of the silt brought in gets left behind, so siltation in the tidal river is an ongoing issue. Mrs Oldfield referred to the historical position of moving discharge points into the tidal river downstream and the Chairman referred to the complexities of the current Salters Lode systems. He also considered that the width of the river was about ⅓ of its design size.

Mr Walker referred to the possibility if pumps were installed, could these be designed to have the capability to pump both into the Block Fen area for storage and also into the Ouse Washes.

In response to queries concerning the remaining life of the Welches Dam Pumping Station, the Chairman considered that when it was refurbished it has an estimated life of around 20 years and the refurbishment was carried out around 2011.

Mr Hawes queried if there will be a public consultation and the Chairman confirmed there would be. Mrs Oldfield agreed to send members a link to the Strategy.

Ms Morris queried current ongoing issues regarding peat and Mr M Heading reported that some of the original proposals had been shown to be unworkable. He reported that as we become better informed about peat levels in the area proposals concerning future cropping and associated proposals would be based on a more robust factual base.

Mr Walker enquired on the level of communication with Sutton & Mepal IDB and the need for a 'common approach'. The Chairman reported that he was in regular contact with the Chairman of both Sutton & Mepal IDB and Upwell IDB as all the Boards have a common interest being their discharge into the Old Bedford River.

Ms Morris enquired about Mrs Oldfield vision for the next 50 years and she considered that we would need to be 'smarter' on how we deal with the water. Currently vast quantities are 'stored' in the Ouse Washes only to be discharged to sea. She considered that systems needed to be modified/adapted to allow the use of this water during the summer months. She referred to the

Middle Level Studies concerning the Bevills Leam pond and alternative storage for Woodwalton Fen.
Mr Sears and Ms Morris referred to the need to get agriculture seen as a priority to enable stakeholders to develop policies to benefit agriculture.

…………………………………………..
Chairman

…………………………………………..
Date