SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board held at Chatteris Cricket Club on Thursday 18th January 2024

PRESENT

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

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

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received M George Esq, M Heading Esq and W Veal Esq.

B.2345 Cranbrook Counter Drain Strategy Presentation

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Mr Gary Roberts from the Environment Agency team, who will make a presentation on the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy.

Mr Roberts gave a general overview of the strategy, updating members that the purpose was to look at the catchment for Welches Dam Pumping Station to utilise exhausted mineral working sites for the storage of surplus water, reducing the reliance on pumping at Welches Dam and to provide a efficient cost effective solution. He reported that the study area was the Block Fen and Longwood Fen areas and the strategy was to have storage capacity for just over $16m^3$, which was statistically twice the required for a major flood event. He confirmed that this volume had been arrived at by needing the storage volume to contain the volume from a statistical flood event under circumstances where the storage had already been taken up following an event which it had not been possible to evacuate.

He reported that all stakeholders had been contacted and were part of the consultation process. Mr Allan queried that he was a land owner in the proposed development area and apart from boreholes being constructed on his land he had not received any further contact. Mr Roberts apologised for the oversight and confirmed he would be included in the consultation process.

He reported on the current and proposed applications for mineral extraction within the proposed site and of the possible time frame for the completion of extraction. Mr R Lee queried the use of any areas of the development for waste storage and raised concerns over possible contamination issues. Mr Roberts confirmed that should there be any existing permission for waste storage this would be for inert waste and would be in clay lined pits which would be separate from flood water storage areas. He confirmed that current plans did not include proposals for waste storage within the flood water storage areas.

In response to Mr P Sole, Mr Roberts confirmed that the flood storage area would be filled by gravity where possible and then filled by pumping. He further confirmed that there would be a requirement to pump out the storage areas if required.

Mr Roberts referred to the Fens Reservoir proposals and the opportunities for shared benefits between the two schemes.

He reported that there were currently the proposals for the Fens Reservoir to extract water from the Counter Drain but they were fully engaged with the Anglian Water team to develop strategies.

He confirmed that the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy was a long-term proposal, based around mineral extraction and that the current timescale for the scheme went to 2041, and that currently there was no permissions in place for the north west area of the site. He reminded members that the current proposals for the Fens Reservoir were for the scheme to come online in the early 2030's.

He reported that the current proposals were to provide storage for double the capacity of Welches Dam Pumping Station, but these could be a requirement to consider additional capacity to this in the future.

Mr Angood queried if it was proposed to keep Welches Dam Pumping Station operational until 2041 and Mr Roberts reported on the intention to phase the development of the site, with the flows from the Sutton & Mepal IDB being accommodated in the first phase. By phasing the use of the site allowed for discharge to be accommodated at different times and the reliance on Welches Dam Pumping Station to be reduced by reducing flows in the Counter Drain.

He reported a part of the scheme proposals being the restoration of the 40ft Drain for the conveyance of flows, which could reopen the navigation.

Cllr Criswell queried how the proposals might affect upstream areas around Somersham which required water to be evacuated quickly as the area was very susceptible to flooding. He considered that there needed to be impact assessments to clearly demonstrate how the proposals would benefit these areas. Mr Roberts confirmed that the strategy would look at the impact for the whole catchment, taking falls into account the issues at the southern end of the district.

Mr R Lee referred to previous maintenance issue on the Counter Drain and in response Mr Roberts reported that the maintenance and seepage issues on the Counter Drain were now being addressed annually through the revenue programme.

Mr Hill referred to the possible use of the Forty Foot in event scenarios, where the Middle Level system would also be full, which could restrict the proposed use of this system. He commented that the previous Welches Dam Strategy extended the working life of the station to the early/mid 2030's while the Sutton & Mepal IDB had the replacement of their Mepal pumping station programmed for around 2030. He considered that the IDB would need to know the outcome of the strategy in order to develop plans for the replacement of Mepal pumping station, the first part of the process for the IDB was to carry out a catchment study. Mr Roberts referred to possible scenarios where the Environment Agency and IDB might have a ‘shared asset’ and possible funding opportunities this could generate. Mr Hill referred to the current precept payments made by Sutton & Mepal IDB and Manea & Welney DDC, which included the operation of Welches Dam Pumping Station and maintenance of the Counter Drain and a requirement to re-visit the calculations should the strategy change the operation of the current system.

Mr Allan Queried potential issues if current permissions allowed/required developers to ‘back-fill’ workings. Mr Roberts confirmed that the policy within the master plan was for exhausted areas to be utilised for water storage so this should limit the potential for sites to be back-filled.

Mr Criswell queried if there were any current proposals/expectations that the proposed water storage area would become ‘conservation areas’.

Mr Roberts referred to the possible after use of ‘dry areas’ these being areas within the site outside of the storage areas, which would only be utilised for water storage in exceptional circumstances. He referred to possible renewable energy generation and Mr R Lee queried current issues regarding grid connections, which could restrict this proposal.

Mr Latta referred to possible land ownership issues, in that the Environment Agency had not currently secured land ownership of the site and queried if there could be future issues if the land owner did not support and embrace the proposals. He further queried future ownership of land, assets and management responsibilities, and if consideration had been given to how arrangements might be put in place if land owners were not prepared to transfer ownership of areas within the site. While accepting that the proposals could result in better control, the board required flows to be speeded up to alleviate problem areas and he queried how flows from neighbouring boards might be managed in event conditions. He referred to the future management regarding water intake and who would be responsible. He reported that the current system was to intake water from the Cranbrook through slackers, but the proposal would probably require water to be pumped from the storage area and then managed through systems which could incur its own costs, which would need funding somehow.

Mr Roberts reported on the Environment Agency current policy regarding land ownership and while it does have compulsory purchase powers the current policy is to arrive at agreement by negotiation.

Mr P Sole queried that as all areas do not have minerals, these could be areas within the site who wished to continue farming. Mr Roberts confirmed that the majority of the site provided opportunity to be developed for the scheme but there were some areas where agreements were currently not in place. In response Mr Smith and Mr R Lee concerning flows into the storage area and the ability to reduce levels in the district quickly, Mr Latta confirmed that pumping would need to be used for water intake into the storage areas and that better control of levels in the Cranbrook/Counter Drain were needed to assist with levels in the district systems. Mr Allan queried the depth of mineral deposits across the site area and Mr Roberts confirmed that surveys from developers had been received, which had been used in developing the proposals.

In response to queried concerning future updates, Mr Latta reported that the board had a sub-committee, who were engaged in consultation concerning the strategy.

Resolved

For the sub-committee to continue to represent the board in developing the strategy and for a further presentation be made to the board at such time as the sub-committee consider appropriate.

B.2346 Declarations of Interest

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

Mr M Latta declared an interest (as a member of the Middle Level Board) on any matters relating to the Middle Level.

Mr M Latta declared an interest in planning application ref MLC 375 & MLC 384.

Mr P Sole and Mr J Sole declared an interest in planning application (MLC 354) received for A Sole & Son and Mr P Sole.

Mr M Jackson declared an interest in planning application MLC 388.

B.2347 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 25th May 2023 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2348 Matters arising from the Minutes

Mr Hill referred to minute B.2324 that the Middle Level solicitor had confirmed that she now had all the relevant information and was in the process of finalising contracts for all concerned parties. In response to Mr Latta, Mr Hill reported that invoices had now been raised to Tarmac, but at this time they remained unpaid.

Resolved

> That every effort be made to finalise all contracts and to get all charges raised as required.

B.2349 Constitution & Membership

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**4**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Thursday 18th January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Polly Tombleson**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Election

The Clerk will report that as the number of candidates for membership did not exceed the number of persons to be elected (sixteen), the following candidates were elected as Members of the Board for a period of three years from 1st November 2023:

A Allan, R Angood, T Edgley, M George, M Heading, M Jackson, M Latta, C Lee
R Lee, R Smith, J Sole, P Sole, E Veal, W Veal.

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

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

D. There are currently **2** vacancies

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

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

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

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	16	N/A		8
Actual	14	1 HDC	15	
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	A Allan	Nominee of ratepayer (Allan Partners)	
2	R Angood	Ratepayer	
3	T Edgley	Nominee of ratepayer (R A Latta Farms Ltd)	
4	M George	Ratepayer	
5	M Heading	Ratepayer	
6	M Jackson	Nominee of ratepayer (DJ & MO Jackson)	

7	M Latta	Ratepayer	Chairman
8	C Lee	Nominee of ratepayer (P J Lee & Sons)	Vice-Chair
9	R Lee	Nominee of ratepayer (P J Lee & Sons)	
10	R Smith	Ratepayer	
11	J Sole	Nominee of ratepayer (A Sole & Son)	
12	P Sole	Nominee of ratepayer (A Sole & Son)	
13	E Veal	Ratepayer	
14	W Veal	Ratepayer	
15			
16			

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	Stephen Criswell	HDC	Councillor
2			

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	25/5/2023	12/1/2023	28/6/2022	13/1/2022
1	A Allan	Attended	Attended	Apologies	Attended
2	R Angood	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
3	T Edgley	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
4	M George			Apologies	
5	M Heading	Apologies	Attended	Attended	Attended
6	M Jackson	Attended	Attended	Attended	Apologies
7	M Latta	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
8	C Lee	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
9	R Lee		Attended	Apologies	Attended
10	R Smith	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
11	J Sole	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
12	P Sole	Attended	Attended	Apologies	Attended
13	E Veal	Apologies	Attended		Attended
14	W Veal	Apologies	Apologies		Apologies
15					
16					

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022	2/11/2021

1	M Latta	Attended	Attended	Attended	

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	25/5/2023	12/1/2023	28/6/2022	13/1/2022
1	Stephen Criswell HDC	Apologies	Attended	Attended	apologies
2					
3					

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 To consider the appointments of the Chair & Vice-Chair.
3.2 To consider the **2** vacancies on the Board.

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 Further to previous minute B.2301, the Clerk to report on 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 15 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 7 of 15 Board Members have reported viewing 2 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

Mr Hill reported that following the election, the following 14 members had been elected to the board for a three-year period from 1st November 2023 and that there are currently two vacancies on the board

M R R Latta	M George	J Sole
C P K Lee	M Heading	P Sole
A Allan	M Jackson	E Veal
R J Angood	R Lee	W Veal
T Edgley	R H Smith	

Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED

That Mr M R R Latta be appointed as Chairman

Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED

That Mr C P K Lee be appointed as Vice-Chair

Filling of Vacancies

Members gave consideration to filling the two vacancies on the board.

RESOLVED

That Mr Charlie Baker and Mr Edward Jackson be invited to become members of the board.

Mr Angood offered thanks on behalf of the board for the services of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman over the previous three years and that the appreciation of the members be recorded in the minutes.

The Chairman reported that Mr Patrick Allpress had decided not to stand for election this time. The Board expressed their appreciation to Mr Allpress and requested that their Thanks be recorded in the minutes.

Amalgamations

The Chairman reported that there had been no further development and considered that this matter was likely to be given greater consideration as the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy became developed.

RESOLVED

That the matter be considered further at the next meeting of the board.

B.2350 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 Board considered and expressed satisfaction with the current Internal Controls.

Risk Management

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

RESOLVED

The Board 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 £.

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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	24,430
2. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	19,819
3. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	10,549
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**54,798**

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		220,940
2. Special Levies		50,278
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		6,097
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		
7. Loans		
8. Rechargeable Works		5,360
9. Interest and Investment Income		5
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		
11. Other Income		1,401
Total income		**284,081**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		36,482
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		115,366
14. Watercourse maintenance		55,955
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		86,098
16. Administration		20,353
17. PSCAs		
18. Rechargeable Works		
19. Finance Charges		
20. SSSIs		
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		673
22. Other Expenditure		289
Total expenditure		**315,216**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**(31,135)**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		283,503
25. Grant income not applied in year		

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

17. State all costs associated with the PSCA

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

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

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

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

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

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

24. Total balance of developer fund year end.

25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

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

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

Biodiversity

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

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

What year was your Biodiversity Action Plan last updated?)............ 2022

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

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

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

SSSI water level management plans

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

If so, which ones:

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

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

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

Access to environmental expertise

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

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

Asset Management

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

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

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

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

66.5

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

1

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

5.77 cumecs

Health and Safety

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

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

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

If so, please summarise in the box below:

Guidance and Best Practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Has your Board adopted the following governance documents?

Standing Orders........Yes ☒ No ☐

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

Byelaws........Yes ☒ No ☐

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

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

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

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

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

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

Board membership and attendance

How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	16
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	4
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	15
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	1
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	11
Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	1

Have you held elections within the last three years?..................Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

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

Complaints procedure

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

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

Public Engagement

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

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

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

0.72%

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

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

Board membership and attendance

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

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

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

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

Section C – Declaration

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

Signature	
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 Boards bankers, the type of accounts held by al 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 al 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 Board, 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.

B.2351 Clerks Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**CLERK’S REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 18th 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 Death in Service Insurance provision for employees with a NEST Pension.

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.

He 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.

RESOLVED

i) That the Board approved to pay the ADA subscription at an increased rate for 2024 of £805.

ii) That the Board approved to contribute to WRE at the requested contribution of £250 for 2024.

iii) That the Death in Service for the boards employees to be covered by the insurance proposals following the successful conclusion of the probationary period.

B.2352 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 their works is to put Environmental/Conservation process and procedures in place, which will then subsequently provide benefit to all IDB's. He encouraged the board to consider appointing an Environmental representative, similar to the boards Health & Safety representative.

B.2353 Consulting Engineer

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**
Date:	**Thursday 11 January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Nicola Oldfield**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Approve the purchase of a replacement pump unit.
B. Review and approve its Capital Programme taking account of the advice in Section 4.
C. To approve undertaking a GiA-funded System Study to better inform and justify future capital works.

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.

Copies of an e-mail dated 5th October, Mott MacDonald's Presentation and Minutes of an Optioneering Work meeting form Appendix 3?

All members of the Board's Sub-Committee have been kept informed of the position but have not always been able to attend meetings due to work commitments and the arrival of Storm Babet. Alternative meetings have been offered by the EA and attended by Sub-Group members.

An update presentation to the Board in lieu of their district inspection has been arranged at the Chairman's request.

4. Capital Programme

4.1 The Board's Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1.

4.2 In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GIA) from the Environment Agency, Mepal Pumping Station Replacement has been identified for potential GiA starting in 2029/30.

In order to maximise GiA allocation, it is recommended that a System Study be undertaken to inform necessary capital works. 100% capital grant is currently available for studies. A typical study will define the problem, identify a range of potential solutions and undertake a technical, environmental and economic appraisal to determine the outline design of an optimum solution that can be developed into a capital scheme. The amount of grant available for delivering any capital scheme recommended by the study will then be determined.

It is proposed that the Study be undertaken before 2027 (i.e. within the current spending review period) if GiA funding can be secured. The study will also include consideration of the potential impacts of works arising from the EA's Cranbrook Counter Drain FRM Strategy.

It is recommended that the Board approve undertaking a GiA-funded System Study to better inform and justify future capital works.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1:	**Capital Programme**
Appendix 2:	**List of applications responded to since last report**
Appendix 3:	**E-mail dated 5 October, Mott MacDonald's Presentation and Minutes of an Optioneering Work meeting held on 3 November 2023**

Appendix 1

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board														
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
Mepal p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,707.0	0.0	0.0	1707.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	36.5	0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	86.5
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	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	5.0	5.0
	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
Plant & Vehicles	Toyota Hilux Pick up	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0
	Case Tractor	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Spearhead Twiga flail mower	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0
	Conver Weedcutting Boat C480F	0	0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0
	Atlas 140w wheeled excavator	0	130	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	130.0
	Piling hammer	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
Drainage Channels	Cranbrook inprovement scheme	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		36.5	**130**	**40**	**60**	**15**	**50**	**0**	**0**	**100**	**1,707**	**0**	**5**	**2,144**

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
378	E/23/00402/FUL	Mr & Mrs P Baxter	Residence (Extension)	Chatteris Road, Mepal
379	F/YR23/0318/RM	J A Investments (London) Ltd	Residential (2 dwellings)	Wood Street, Chatteris
380	F/YR23/0349/VOC	Hallam Land Management Ltd & B S Pension Trustee Ltd	Mixed Use Development comprising residential development up to 1,000 dwellings, employment (B1, B2, & B8), Local Centre (A1, A2, A3, A4 & D1), and Primary School	London Road, Chatteris
381	H/23/00751/HHFUL	Mr P Fisk	Residence (Annexe)	Colnefields, Somersham
382	E/23/00505/FUM	Monkfield Nutrition	Solar – ground mounted panels	Chatteris Road, Mepal
383	F/YR23/0428/F	Mr W Todd	Residence (Car port)	Eastwood, Chatteris
384	E/20/01611/DISA	Mr Latta	Residence	The Gault, Sutton
385	F/YR23/0476/F	Mr & Mrs Dixon	Residence	London Road, Chatteris
386	F/YR23/3086/COND	Mr Shepherd	Residential (2 dwellings)	Tithe Road, Chatteris
387	F/YR23/0678/F	Mr Bailey	Residence (Extension)	London Road Chatteris
388	F/YR23/0701/AG1	D & M Jackson & Son	Agricultural building	Iretons Way, Chatteris

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
41	Construct an access culvert across the Board's water-course between Points 5 & 14	15/08/2023

No Discharge Consent or Infiltration Device applications have been received since the last meeting.

Appendix 3

Our ref: GM/139/1/Cranbrook/Counter Drain FRMS + 350/16a

Good afternoon all,

Middle Level Commissioners & Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Cranbrook and Counter Drain FRM Strategy - Steering Group/Supporting Work Implementation

Hydraulic modelling and other work being undertaken by Mott MacDonald

Matthew many thanks for your e-mail advising on your availability following Gary's recent intervention.

Gary has subsequently advised that he is checking the availability of Mott MacDonald, the EA's consultant on this project, and will advise when these have been received. However, during the week suggested by Matthew I am currently available on the 16th, 17th and 19th October, but am uncertain about my availability the following week, at this time. It may be beneficial if members of the Sub-Group could advise when they are unavailable as this may assist finalising the date/time.

The Board has previously agreed that it does not want to be the owner of the final facility but that it would consider being, and would be the most opportune, maintenance provider and operator as it ensures that the Board retains control of the associated water level management systems.

Whilst the Board has not raised any unease about the project, I have discussed my concerns with Gary including the lack of consultation with the Board on the progress made to date and the direction that the project is heading.

I have several concerns but the main ones are that the final facility is not maintained in perpetuity by the Board, subject to a suitable agreement being reached, because it considers that it:

A. Is inappropriate and is not of a suitable standard or meets current and future design standards, as far as these can be predicted.

B. Is subject to severe environmental constraints that limit any operation and/benefit.

C. Is unmaintainable.

D. Does not fund itself and becomes a burden on the Boards rate payers.

However, it is accepted that there may be other reasons and these can be discussed at the meeting.

A copy of Mott MacDonalds presentation slides has been received and are attached for your information. I have yet to give these any detailed consideration but will review them prior to the meeting.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification in the meantime please let me know.

Kind regards

Graham Moore
Planning Engineer

Project progress

Data collection and review of previous studies

Long list and appraisal

Workshop – agree short list

Consultation with other stakeholders

Short List appraisal and hydraulic/GIS modelling

Benefit Cost Assessment

After use assessment

Workshop – agree preferred option/s

Options philosophy

Flow Routes in and out

- Initial brainstorm options with catchment knowledge and site visit walk-over
- Developed the list further with iterations and removal of options
- Range of flow routes using different drains to accommodate stakeholder needs and catchment constraints

Flood storage options

- Exact depths and locations of mineral excavations are to be confirmed to inform depths of storage areas and frequency of wet/dry
- Range of storage options to provide levels of operation and maintenance and possible reactional activities

After use and environmental opportunities

- Long list of after use options produced and market research carried out
- To be assessed/shortlisted following short list engineering and storage options.
- Environmental opportunities identified for all options but not included in RAG assessment.

Flow Routes in and out

Options Summary

Option Numbers	Intake	Conveyance through site and to storage areas	Draw down/Outflow
1,2,3	From Forty Foot Drain (via gravity)	Existing and new drains proposed New flow control structures Different routes through the storage areas between Options 1,2,3	Crooked Drain and Bell Drain both drain via gravity to Mepal Pumping Station, then pumped to Counter Drain
4	From Forty Foot Drain (via gravity) and Crooked Drain (via gravity)	Existing and new drains proposed New flow control structures Manual operation	Bell Drain via gravity to Mepal Pumping Station, then pumped to Counter Drain
6,7	From Forty Foot Drain (pump at Horseway Lock)	Option 6 pumps into new drainage **ditches** to storage areas Option 7 conveyed via buried **pipework** to storage areas	Option 6 Crooked Drain and Bell Drain both drain via gravity to Mepal Pumping Station, then pumped to Counter Drain Option 7 reverse pump from storage area to FFD and/or drain by gravity via Bell Drain to Mepal Pumping Station
8,10	From the Counter Drain (via gravity) to Bell Drain	Existing and new drains proposed New flow control structure Different routes through the storage areas between Options 8,10	Crooked Drain via gravity to Mepal Pumping Station, then pumped to Counter Drain.
9	From Crooked Drain (via gravity)	Existing and new drains proposed New flow control structures	Horseway Lock and Forty Foot Drain. Drains away from Welches Dam to the west.

Short Listed Option 1/2/3

(A) Flood flows down FFD to HL

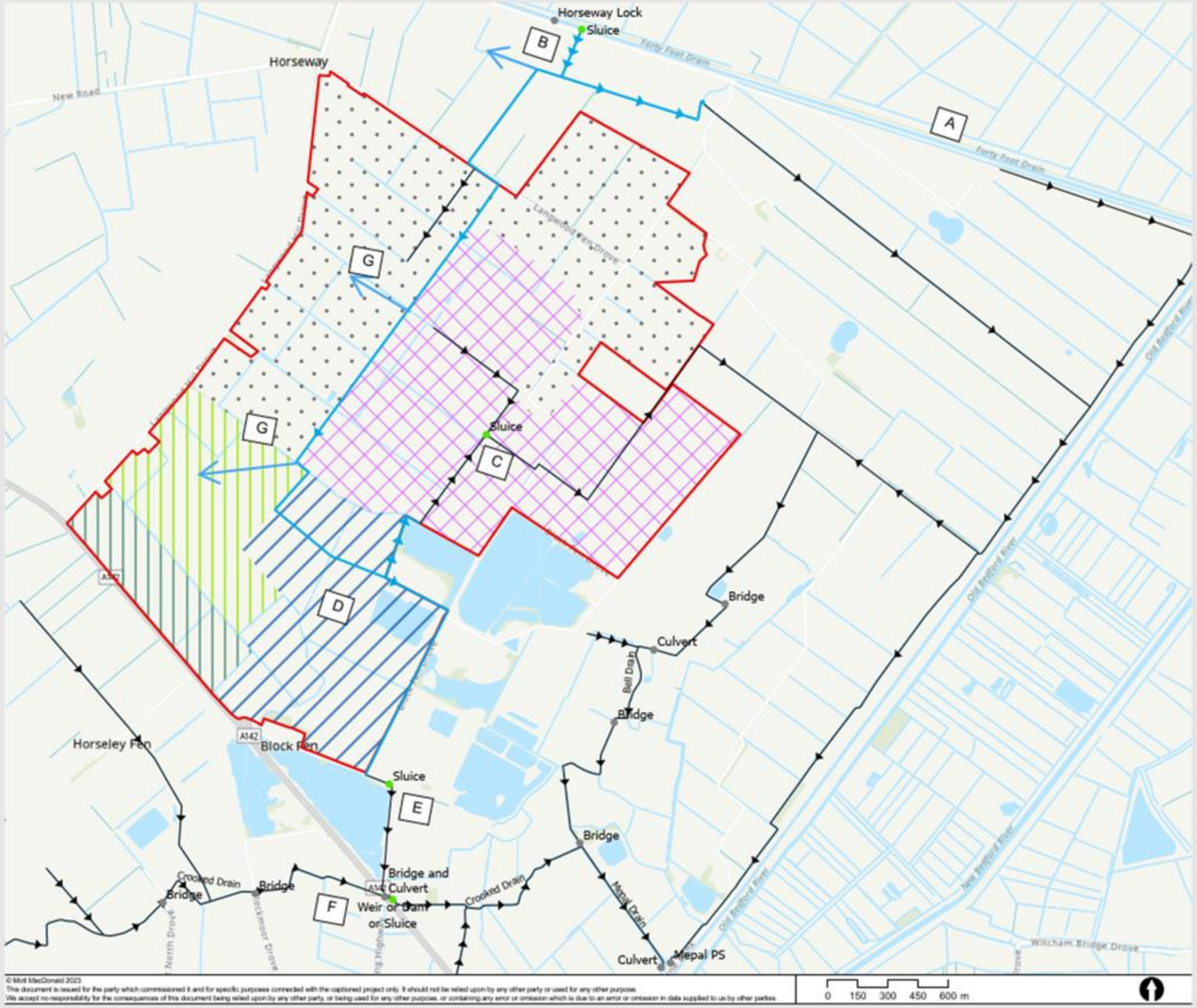
(B) Ditch/Structure proposed at HL, to allow water to flow from FFD along the proposed ditch.

(C) Proposed Structure within Hanson will maintain water levels down to the Bell Drain and Mepal PS

(D) Flow around Tarmac boundary

(E) Proposed Structure to manage water

(F) Outflow down Crooked Drain, then down to Mepal PS. Structure on Crooked Drain will control flow



Short Listed Option 4

(A) Flood flows down FFD to HL

(B) Ditch/Structure proposed at HL, to allow water to flow from FFD along the proposed ditch to Tarmac Western

(C) Proposed drain through the Tarmac connected to existing IDB drains

(D) Inflow from Crooked Drain

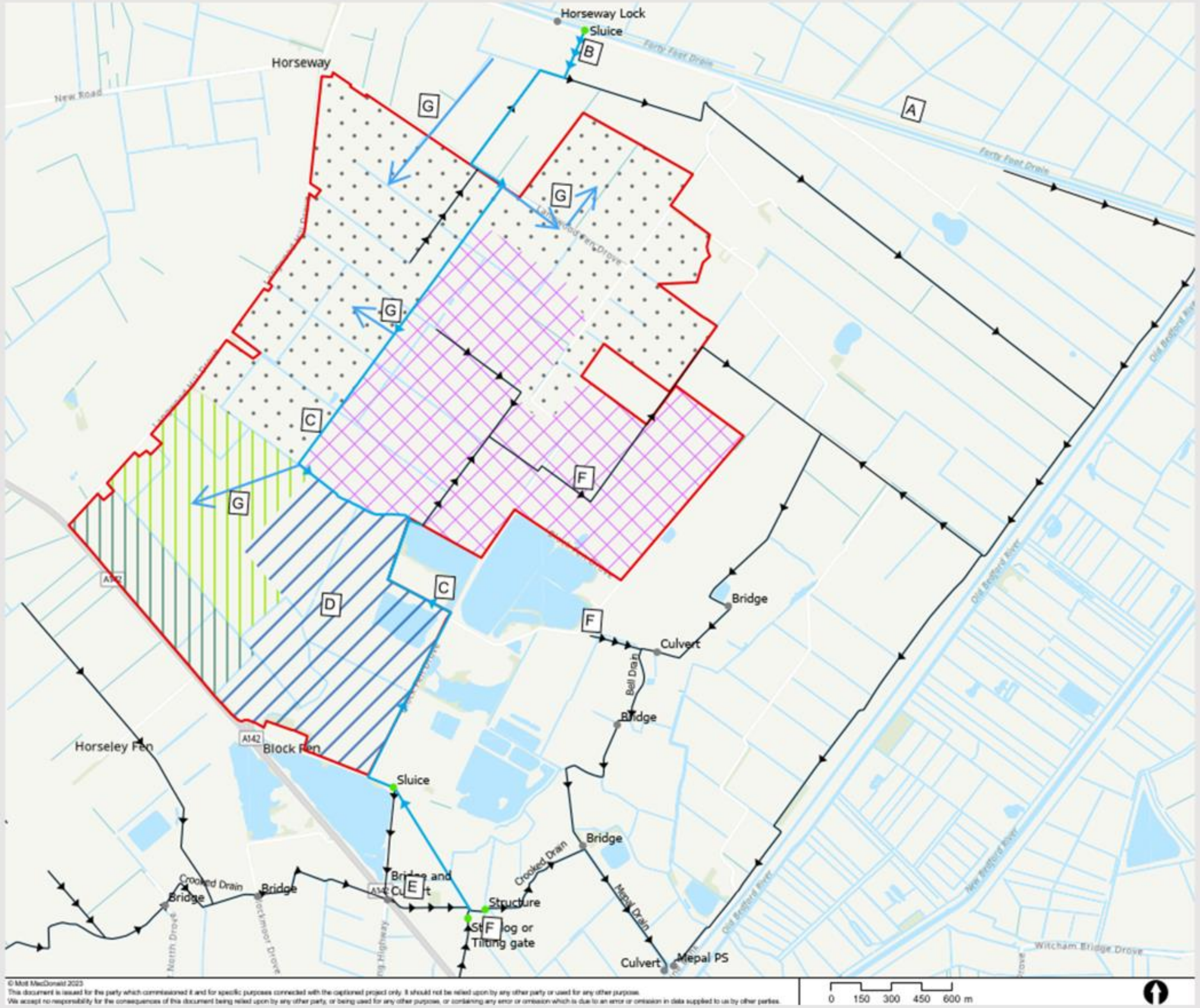
(E) Outflow connected Bell Drain.

(F) Proposed structure on Crooked Drain to reduce flow to Mepal Drain.

(G) Proposed flow Paths to feed into added storage areas when available.

Manual operation of structures

Option 5 has been removed as this was as per Option 4 with automatic operation.



Short Listed Option 8/10

(A) Proposed structure to direct flows down Bell Drain directly from Counter Drain

(B) Slacker or Sluice to manage flow down to Mepal PS

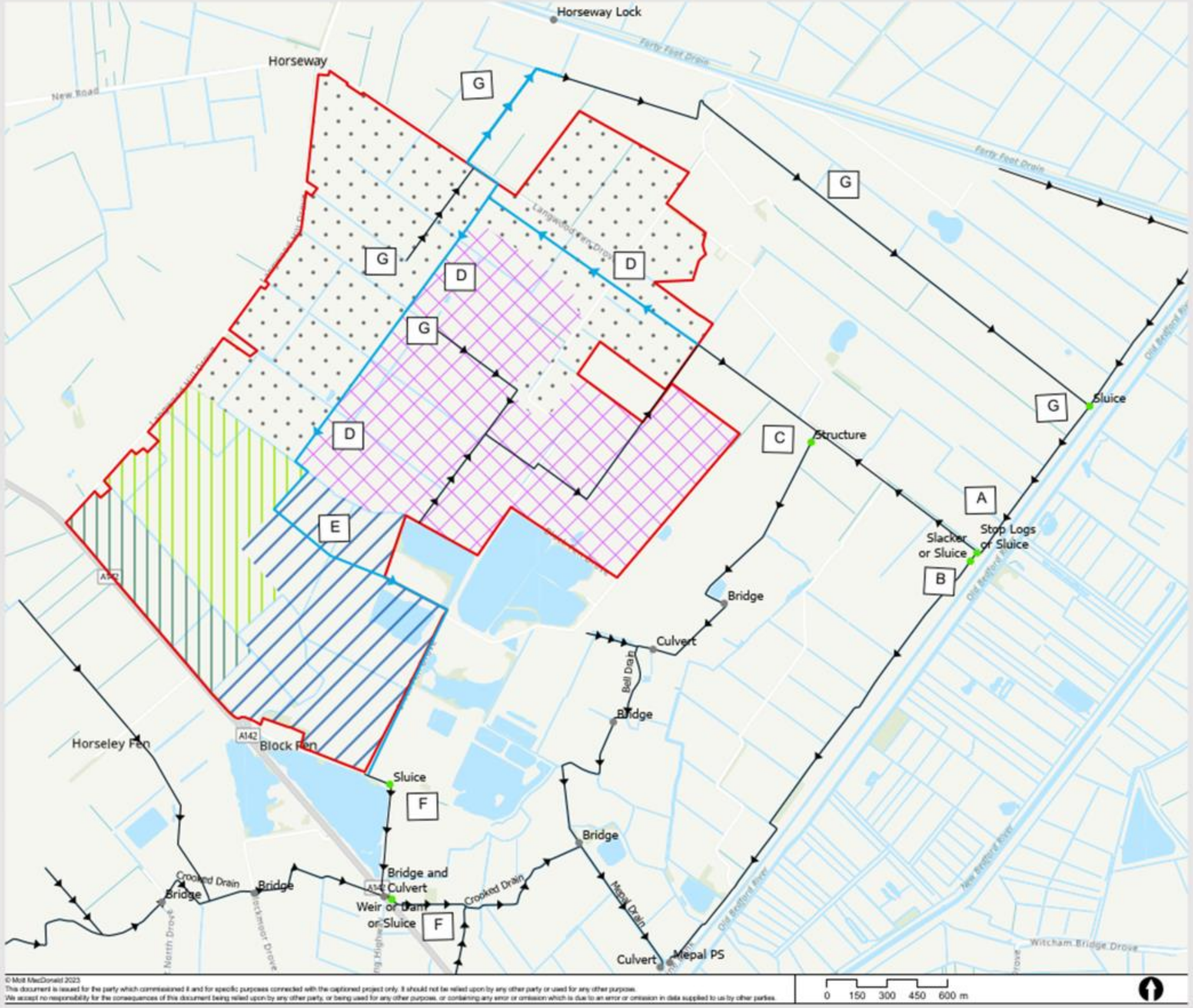
(C) Structure on Bell Drain to direct flow to storage areas, can be opened to facilitate bypass or drawdown.

(D) Flow through North West Allocation connecting to proposed drain along Hanson site

(E) Initial flow to Tarmac with offtakes to other areas when available

(F) Outflow through Crooked Drain down to Mepal PS, with flow control structure to manage flows

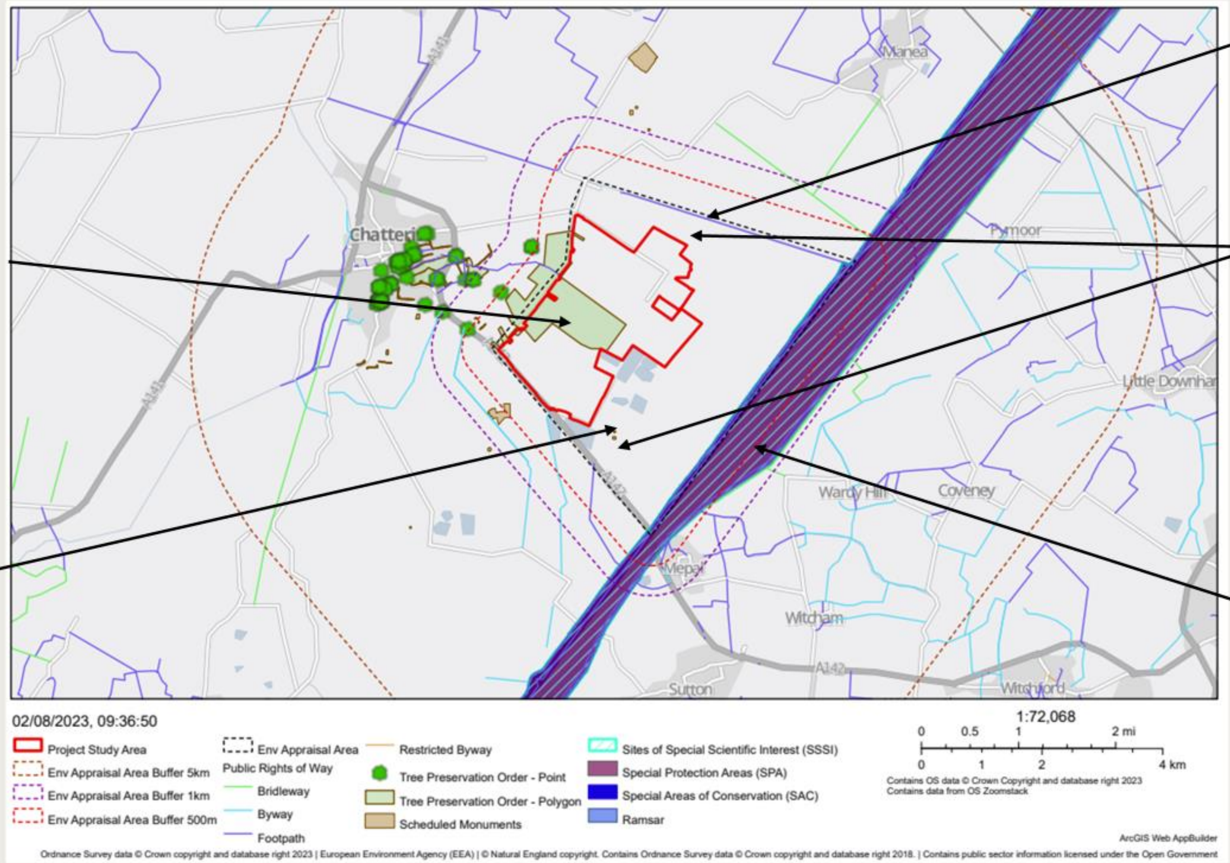
(G) When Hanson site available, draw down can occur via the existing and proposed drains down to Counter Drain



Key Constraints – Environmental

Project study area and **Environmental appraisal study area**

No show stoppers currently identified



Group TPO - all trees of various species standing on the farmlands (along field boundaries - mineral company assumed to remove some)

Scheduled Monuments barrows (prehistoric barrow cemetery) unlikely to be affected

County Wildlife Sites no information available

Public right of way

Archaeological sensitivity in all previously undisturbed areas.
Two specific areas of **known higher archaeological sensitivity.**

Ouse Washes SAC, SPA, Ramsar and SSSI - **spined loach** and breeding and non-breeding water **birds** likely to use area as functionally linked habitat

Environmental Design Considerations

Proposed feature or activity	Environmental Design Considerations
New ditches	• Two stage ditches of natural materials (not reinforced) to enable new aquatic and marginal wetland habitat and bank stabilisation (prevent sediment generation). • Tree planting (preferably to the west) along some ditches to regulate water temperatures. • Maintain oxygen levels with sweetening flow and/or oxygenating plants • Straight to reinforce the landscape pattern of historic drainage ditches • Route new ditches to avoid removal of, or damage to, TPOs. • Construction best practice
New structures in ditches (sluices, weirs etc)	• Should enable fish passage, if suitable • Design and locate to reflect the scale and design of existing engineered elements in the landscape, and avoid extending above ground level to minimise adverse landscape and visual effects • Provide access across structure where affects PRoW south of Forty Foot Drain
Pumps and pumping stations (if required for ditches and storage areas)	• Reduce or avoid increased turbidity through mobilising sediment. • Reduce or avoid noise/vibration disturbance • Reduce or avoid artificial lighting • Design to be fish friendly and not lead to significant mortality • Design and locate to reflect the scale and design of existing engineered elements in the landscape, and avoid extending above ground level where possible to minimise adverse landscape and visual effects
Existing ditches	• Consider water routed through existing ditches which act as habitat for species such as water vole and nesting birds (e.g. kingfisher), as increased fluctuations in water levels and changes in flows in spring and summer could flood burrows (mortality), and affect aquatic vegetation, invertebrates and fish

Environmental Design Considerations

Proposed feature or activity	Environmental Design Considerations
Storage areas	• Smaller scale storage better reflects smaller-scale landscape pattern • When filling, avoid eroding soil, which would add suspended sediment and nutrients to the water, causing water pollution. • When filling, determine if possible and desirable to exclude fish from each storage area • If fish able to enter, design and drain in a way that avoids fish strandings or never fully drain.
Excavation outside of mineral extraction areas	• Archaeological sensitivity in all locations - archaeological investigation required unless prior disturbance can be demonstrated. • Higher known sensitivities include around King's Farm Cottage and south of the barrow SMs
Land use adjacent to ditches and within storage areas	Should use good practice land use management to avoid soil and nutrients (e.g. fertiliser) run-off entering the drains and excess nutrients reaching the groundwater via drains/ditches, or adding nutrients to water in storage areas, causing water pollution. Consider: • a non-agricultural land use where water may be stored more permanently. • trees to shade more permanent storage areas to reduce water temperatures

After Use Options

- Scope: “After use is referring to land use after restoration of mineral extractions, alongside flood storage areas there is opportunity for other after use.”

Long list of >60 after use options categorised by:

- Agriculture/aquaculture
- Education
- Energy generation
- Habitat
- Payment for services
- Recreation
- Services
- Water supply

Anything to add…?

After Use Long List (1/2)

Agriculture / aquaculture
- Water based crops e.g. watercress
- Peat based crops - paludiculture - sphagnum moss
- Peat based crops - paludiculture - Cranberries
- Low-level agriculture
- Ground level agriculture - Traditional crops/farmland (as per current)
- Commercial fisheries/hatcheries
- Commercial reed beds
- Grow materials for fuel
- Grow (eco) building materials

Payment for services
- Land management scheme
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Carbon sequestration/offset (peat, soil carbon, woodland/trees)

Habitat
- Floating wetland on waterbodies
- Green roofs on existing buildings
- OM4 A Intertidal habitat
- OM4 A Woodland
- OM4 A Wet woodland
- OM4 A Wetlands / wet grassland
- OM4 A Grassland
- OM4 A Heathland
- OM4 A Ponds / lakes
- OM4 A Arable land
- OM4 B Comprehensive restoration of natural processes
- OM4 B Partial restoration of natural processes
- OM4 B Restoration of a single major physical improvement
- Habitats required to meet 20% BNG

Water supply
- Local agriculture (Sutton and Mepal IDB area)
- Middle level system (wider - north)

After Use Long List (2/2)

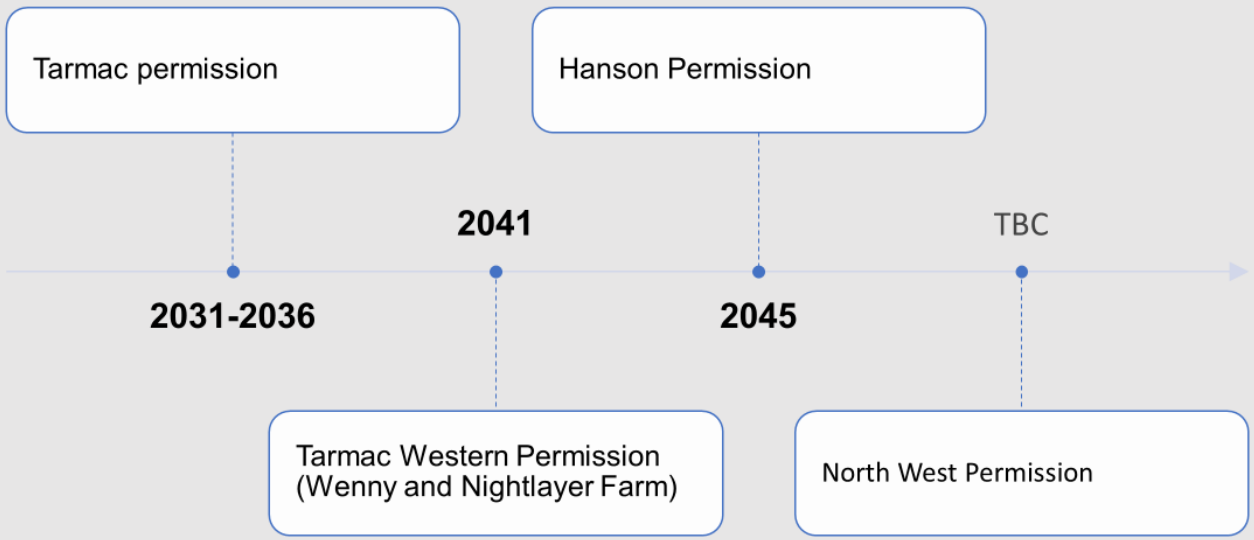
Energy generation
- Wind turbines
- Floating solar farm
- Land-based solar farm
- River water source heat pumps
- Hydropower

Education
- School visits
- Forest school

Services
- Petrol Service Station
- Burial site e.g. natural burial site, memorial nature area

Recreation
- Holidays - holiday homes (floating)
- Floating visitor centre like Brockholes Nature Reserve
- Public access for walking/cycling/horse riding
- Bird watching with hides
- Water sports e.g. sailing, jet skies, paddle boarding, angling, scuba diving, inland surfing, canoeing
- Wild swimming
- Water Park
- Country Park - Chatteris/March
- Boating/navigation
- Driving e.g. 4x4 off road, go-karting
- Paintballing
- Archaeology park
- Heritage trail
- Art trail
- Gardening e.g. community orchard, allotments, pick your own fruit/veg
- Enclosed dog walking field/meadow/park/field
- Golf e.g. golf club, driving range
- Clay pigeon shooting / "country activities"
- Horse stables e.g. commercial with riding lessons, private livery
- Parachute centre/airfield
- Camping / glamping
- Garden centre with café , playground
- Farm park with kids play area, café, working farm with rides

Phasing timeline



Cranbrook Counter Drain
Flood Risk Management Strategy
Sutton & Mepal IDB Meeting Notes

Date: 03 November 2023 **Time: 10am – 12pm** **Location: MLC Offices/MS Teams**

Attendees:

Gary Roberts (EA) Amy Butcher (EA) Catherine Jenkins (MM)
Alex Haydon (MM) Emma Fox (MM) Graham Moore (MLC)
Matthew Latta (Sutton & Mepal IDB)

Apologies:

Elettra Spadola (EA) Christopher Lee Richard Lee
James Sole Philip Sole

Alex Haydon presented the three outline options which can be summarised as follows:

- Option 1 - Transferring flood flows from the restored Forty Foot Drain into the site and discharging out through the southern side of the site via Mepal pumping station.
- Option 2 – Transferring flood flows from Crooked Drain into flood storage initially, then as further storage comes online also transferring flood flows into storage from the restored Forty Foot Drain. Again, discharging out of the site via Mepal pumping station.
- Option 3 – Transferring flood flows from Counter Drain via a new/enhanced drain part way along site, discharging out via Mepal pumping station.

The following key points were raised during the discussions:

- Concerns raised around double pumping. AH explained that intension would be to utilise stored water if possible (e.g. irrigation). GR explained storage will be designed for 2 No. 1in25 year events and the aim will be to make use of gravity for emptying of storage where possible. GR also explained that the stored water will serve all three IDBs so need for long term storage unlikely. Stored water could also feed into MLC system.
- ML raised concerns that all three IDBs will effectively be filling the storage but Sutton & Mepal IDB will be responsible for emptying the storage.
- Mepal pumping station is a key asset in these options but it will be reaching the end of its life within the phasing period for the storage coming online.

customer service line 03708 506 506 incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 floodline 03459 88 11 88

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

- Mepal PS could take over from Welches Dam by transferring water out of storage back into Counter Drain for other IDBs but could also pump into Ouse Washes.

- ML proposed the option of upgrading other IDB's pumping stations to pump outlets through Middle Level Barrier Bank for over-design events.
- ML raised concerns that the water levels in Counter Drain are difficult to manage when at low levels in the current arrangement - Welches Dam pumps but there's flooding at Somersham. These proposals could make this situation worse.
- ML asked whether the use for the Forty Foot Drain conflicts with the proposals for the Fens Reservoir. GR confirmed there is a lot of overlap and discussions with the Fens Reservoir team are ongoing.
- ML explained that he could accept the proposals in principle but could not say whether the board will agree without more detail. ML would like more clarity on what we would be asking Sutton & Mepal to do in these scenarios. Who would own the assets, who funds their operation and maintenance? Would Sutton & Mepal IDB be paid to transfer water for supplying other IDBs? Would anyone have overall authority over storage areas? Concerned if multiple entities owned different parts of site.
- GR & AH explained the project is investigating revenue options to fund the various options, e.g. charging for the water.
  - ML explained that currently, rate payers do not pay for the water transferred into the system via the slackers so paying for water in future would not be favourable option. Some irrigating rate payers have their own winter storage reservoirs so have no need for the water stored here. Other IDBs just transfer water into system via slackers at no cost but would have to pay in these scenarios.

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**
Date:	**Thursday 11 January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Dave Bantoft**

2. 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 station and control panels are at an age where reliability is starting to become a concern, this will be addressed in the upcoming district study.

1.2 **Pumps**

The overhauled spare unit from stock was fitted to pump 1 in July 2022 - as water was coming up through the cables, the plan at this time was to overhaul the unit and refit. This was not viable, and a replacement pump was ordered. The plan was still to fit to pump 1 canister. The pump was delivered during spring and the decision made for it to be fitted and commissioned at the end of summer so the warranty would run from the 12 months from commissioning, rather than delivery date.

During this time pump 2 insulation resistance dropped significantly, which is a sign of water ingress into the motor and the decision was made to fit the new unit as pump 2. During fitment, at the end of September, we were not satisfied of the condition of the cable gland seals so fitting was stopped and condition reported to pump manufacturer. Their recommendation was that pump should be returned to them for the seals to be replaced and the pump pressure tested at the expense of the Board. This was challenged and the manufacturer then accepted that the costs of return transport and testing would be theirs. The seals were replaced, pump pressure tested successfully and then fitted on 25th October. The cable entry gland plate had to be modified to accept a larger diameter cable type on new pump.

These are the pumps currently fitted:

Pump 1 - Previously overhauled spare unit fitted.
Pump 2 - New unit fitted October 2023
Pump 3 - New unit fitted October 2019

The pump removed from pump 2 canister was working when removed on 27th September but it had poor insulation resistance which is a sign of water ingress into the motor. It is one of the original pumps and has been overhauled in the past. Overhauling this unit again is not recommended as due to its age it is unlikely to be viable or reliable.

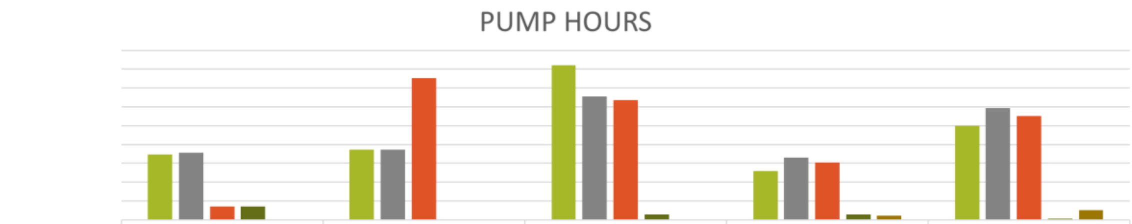
This pump cannot be deemed as a reliable spare.

To ensure resilience with availability of a spare pump it is recommended that a new pump is purchased and fitted as pump 1 and the current pump 1 back to being spare unit.

A quote has been requested from Xylem, it is likely to be in the region of £35k-£40k.

The Board is asked to approve the purchase of a replacement unit.

3. Pumping summary



	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
PUMP 1	693	747	1644	517	997
PUMP 2	710	744	1310	659	1185
PUMP 3	141	1504	1271	611	1102
PUMP 4	143	0	55	55	8
WSC				44	99

PUMP 1 PUMP 2 PUMP 3 PUMP 4 WSC

4. Inspections

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

3.2 ElCR Test and Due dates as below.

Sutton & Mepal	Mepal	23-Oct-2019	23-Oct-2024

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

The Chairman referred to the discussion concerning the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy and considered, that although grant-in-aid would be currently available for a District Study, the study would need to be reliant on any proposals coming from the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy, without which it would not be possible for the board to develop any proposals concerning the refurbishment/replacement of Mepal pumping station. He considered that while the outcomes of this study were awaited, the boards policy should be to maintain Mepal pumping station to extend its working life.

Mr Smith referred to a previous study, which had resulted in proposals for a second pumping station at Black Sluice, and queried if there may be any information within that study which would be useful for the proposed district study.

The Chairman referred to issues concerning high water levels during the last rainfall event and reported that following a full inspection of the district system he found the problem to be at Welches Dam Pumping Station.

Following discussion with the Environment Agency, they had agreed to revise the pumping regime and he had approved for the boards weed boat to be utilised on the Environment Agency system to clear weed blocking flows. As a result of these actions, levels had been reduced within 24 hours, and there had not been any major issues during the last flood event. He confirmed that he had an arranged meeting with the Environment Agency on 8th February 2024 at which he would be discussing the more efficient running of Welches Dam Pumping Station.

The Chairman reported that the new excavator was due for delivery by the end of this month and he had been on a visit to the factory with the District Officer and had been impressed with construction.
He referred to the operation of the pumps during the rainfall and the use of diesel pump when possible. He reported that there had been some issues with the diesel engine which had now been overcome but reminded members of the engines age and that it should only be relied upon as a standby and not a front-line resource.

He reminded members that when setting the rates it had been discussed to install switch-over gear to allow for the use of a generator, which with current electricity unit costs would provide savings. However, the works required to convert the existing control panel proved too expensive and it was decided not to proceed with the proposal.

Members discussed the Engineers' comments concerning the electric pumps and the Chairman confirmed that currently there were two 'new' pumps and one older reconditioned pump in service, with the most recent pump removed acting as standby. He reported that this pump, although working was showing signs of deterioration and although operational could not be fully relied upon. The Chairman confirmed that the lead in time for delivery of a new pump was approximately three months.

Mr Angood queried the implications of operating with only two pumps and the Chairman confirmed that during the last recent event, the three electric pumps could only maintain levels and it was only the introduction of the diesel pump that allowed pumping to keep ahead of levels at the pumping station.

Resolved

i) Report accepted and approved.

ii) That the board defer commissioning a District Study and discuss the matter further at the next meeting of the board.

iii) That the engineer look into the previous study carried out to see if there is any useful information that could be of benefit.

iv) That the board defer placing an order for a new pump and review further at the next meeting of the board.

B.2354 Health and Safety

The Vice-Chairman reported that there was a meeting with Cope Safety Management due on 15th February 2024 and that all matters raised in previous visits/reports had been attended to. He confirmed that all relevant Health and Safety training would be arranged for the new employee following his successful probationary period.

District Officers Report

The Chairman reported that the boat had been fully painted and all plant and machinery was in good order. He referred to previous discussions concerning the pumping units.

He referred to the lack of a written report for this meeting and confirmed that he would discuss the importance of a written report with the officer.

B.2355 Finance Report – Looking Back

Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2022/2023

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

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

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

The Clerk
Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Board

Date of Announcement: 25th August 2023

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

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
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: 31/05/2023 12/06/2023 14/06/2023

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

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: R. PEECH – WHITINGS LLP

Date: 14/06/2023

***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:

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

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

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

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

25/05/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

B.2340

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

Chairman

Clerk

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	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	700,582	682,359	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	236,745	271,218	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	15,302	12,863	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	35,684	37,190	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	234,586	260,179	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	682,359	669,071	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	694,567	683,227	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,202,164	3,202,164	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings			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 8th May 2023

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

25/05/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

B.2342

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

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

In respect of **Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board – DB0105**

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 22/08/2023

b) The Board 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 & Hostmoor Avenue
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AX
t: 01354 652 904
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

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

Mr Hill reported that following his submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £1,055.39 (£5,953.88 less £4,898.49 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 £7,604.60 in respect of 80% of the Board's estimated expenditure for the financial year 2023/2024.

B.2356 Finance – Looking Forward

Mr Hill reported that the Anglian (Great Ouse) RFCC Meeting had approved an additional 1% on top of the 2% annual increase to Internal Drainage Board precepts for the year ended 31st March 2025, giving a recommended increase of 3%.

Budget Monitoring
Viz:

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024

		Approved budget 2023/2024 £	Actual to 31.12.2023 £	Forecast to 31.03.2024 £
1	Rates, telephones and insurances	7,150 [A]	6,037	6,600
2	Drainworks, repairs and renewals (including Environmental measures)	22,000	18,617 [B]	25,500 [C]
	Drainage channel - Cranbrook	0	0	0
3	Oil and electricity	90,700 [D]	40,506	115,000 [E]
4	District labour	76,500 [F]	35,654 [F]	64,500 [F]
5	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc	20,900	8,738	20,900
6	Environment Agency - Precept	118,827	118,827	118,827
7	Plant replacement	25,000 [G]	16,666 [G]	25,000 [G]
		361,077	245,045	376,327
	LESS :			
	Use of balances	36,250 [H]	10,743 [H]	26,500 [H]
	Revenue income	34,439 [I]	30,702	39,427 [J]
		290,388	203,600	310,400

Rates and Special Levy raised 2023/2024 - 46.00p £290,388

Remarks

A - Includes estimate for increased premiums

B - Includes for:

Maintenance/general	2,970
Service/repairs to excavator	2,182
	5,152

C - Includes for:

Maintenance/general	6,000
Service/repairs to excavator	3,200
Pumping station/general repairs	16,300
	25,500

D - Provision adjusted for use of generator

E - estimated without provision for savings from use of generator

F - Includes provision for District Officer succession planning

G - Provision for plant replacement strategy 25,000

H - Balances for District Officer succession planning

I - Includes metered discharge recovery 20,000

J - Includes for:

Metered discharge recovery	20,000
Full highland water claims	8,470

Mr Hill referred to the schedule and confirmed he had reviewed the figures with the Chairman, at which point they had considered that currently most areas of expenditure were likely to be in line with the forecast but recent rainfall events would likely increase the boards pumping costs beyond the forecast.
Members accepted the position in that they had no control over the weather patterns and were required to do all they could to provide effective drainage to the district.

B.2357 Date of next Meeting

Thursday 23rd May 2024 at Chatteris Cricket Club including Inspection at 8.30am.

Thursday 16th January 2025 at Chatteris Cricket Club at 8.30am.

B.2358 Any Other Business

The Chairman referred to the appointment of the new District Officer who members had met prior to the start of the meeting. He reported that the recruitment process had been 'interesting' and had highlighted the difficulties in replacing a long-term employee. He reported that the new Officer had shown a real interest in the work and had recently started training on the excavator.
He confirmed that he did not want to move into the board's bungalow at the pumping station and that it was intended to rent the bungalow following David's retirement.

The Chairman asked members their view concerning a retirement function for David. He informed members that David had been employed for 36 years by the board and members considered an appropriate level for a retirement gift. Members were in favour of a meal and presentation.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to discuss the matter with David and to arrange a suitable retirement function and gift.

……………………………….
Chairman

………………………
Date