MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

At a Meeting of the March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners
hosted at the Middle Level Offices, March on Tuesday the 11th April 2023

PRESENT

T D Hopkin Esq (Chairman)	Cllr J French
A Payne Esq (Vice Chairman)	P Hayes Esq
Miss E Alterton	J Lilley Esq
T E Alterton Esq	

Miss Samantha Ablett (representing the Clerk to the Commissioners), Paul Burrows and Mr Morgan Lakey (representing the Consulting Engineers) were in attendance.

The Chairman enquired whether ALL Commissioners were happy for the meeting to be recorded. All Commissioners were in agreement.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from S Bushell Esq, P Beeton Esq, G Hopkin Esq & F Yeulett Esq

C.1227 Declarations of Interest

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

Cllr French declared an interest in all planning matters as members of Fenland District Council

Mr T D Hopkin declared an interest in District Officer matters

Mr and Miss Alterton declared an interest in the planning application (MLC Ref Nos 392 & 396 & 471) for The Wilkinson Family

C.1228 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Commissioners held on the 12th April 2022 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

C.1229 Bank Mandate and National Savings & Investments

RESOLVED

i) That Mr P Burrows be added as an authorised signatory of the Barclays Bank Account, should this be required in the future.

ii) That Mr P Burrows, as Clerk to the Board and Mr T Hopkin, as Chairman, be the authorised signatories of the National Savings Investment Account and that the account of March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners with National Savings and Investments be changed accordingly.

C.1230 Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED

That T D Hopkin Esq be appointed Chairman of the Commissioners.

C.1231 Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED

That A Payne Esq be appointed Vice Chairman of the Commissioners.

C.1232 Appointment of District Officer

RESOLVED

That T D Hopkin Esq be appointed District Officer to the Commissioners during the ensuing year.

C.1233 Land Drainage Act 1991
Fenland District Council

Miss Ablett reported that Fenland District Council had appointed Councillor F Yeulett to be a commissioner under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

C.1234 Member Training Update

Miss Ablett reported that, in the past year, 6 members from a total of 12 had undertaken the ADA Governance & Accountability training via the video link provided.

She advised there were other areas of training available by the ADA video link and would encourage all members to take part.

She added that the number of Members having undertaken a form of training was having to be reported to both the Environment Agency and DEFRA on the IDB 1 Return annually.

RESOLVED

That the link to the ADA training videos be re-sent to the Chairman and Councillor French.

C.1235 Land at the Slamp - Kart Track, Creek Fen, March

Further to minute C.1197, The Consulting Engineer reported that problems continued at the Slamp. The layby and the gate had been completely blocked off and there was no access.

Councillor French advised that the landowner planned to open up a Kart Track, which was subject to planning permission, and added she understood that he wished to tidy the whole site and install/construct some cabins.

The Consulting Engineer advised there was a bus on site that had been converted and was up for sale, together with two static caravans, despite planning permission only having been given for one and added there were also numerous tyres deposited on the site.

Councillor French confirmed permission had only been granted for one caravan and she agreed to request the Council's enforcement officer to inspect the site and take any necessary action.

The Chairman reported the main concern was that the Commissioners had no access to the land due to the gate and despite asking for a key, on numerous occasions, this had not been forthcoming.

The Consulting Engineer also reported that he and the Assistant Clerk had met, on site, with the Chairman. He advised that the layby was not showing as registered to anyone on the Land Registry, despite the landowner claiming rights to the land. The Consulting Engineer advised that at the site visit the Chairman had approved for the Assistant Clerk to register the land in the name of the Commissioners.

The Consulting Engineer advised that if the Commissioners apply to register the land, there was a risk that the landowner would appeal against it. He advised that if the Commissioners chose to proceed following any appeal, they may wish to call another meeting to discuss the matter further and consider requesting legal advice before proceeding, in order to ascertain the likelihood of a positive outcome and so as to avoid unnecessary costs.

RESOLVED

> Consent for the gate that is blocking access continues to be refused until the landowner provides a key.
>
> The Chairman's actions be approved and that the Assistant Clerk registers the whole of the unregistered layby with the Land Registry in the name of March Fifth DDC
>
> That the Assistant Clerk checks the Slamp Land is registered to March 5th DDC at the Land Registry
>
> That Councillor French arranges for a Council Enforcement officer to visit the site in relation to the number of caravans illegally sited and to review the rubbish from an Environmental Health aspect

C.1236 Erection of cold storage building (MLC Ref No. 455) – March Cold Store

Further to minute C.1198, Miss Ablett reported the development had not commenced and the previously granted planning permission had expired.

C.1237 Pipe at Point 29

Further to minute C.1200, The Chairman reported there had been no further change since the previous meeting, but he would continue to monitor the situation.

C.1238 Pump at North Creek Pumping Station

Further to minute C.1201, Miss Ablett reported that preliminary details had been collected regarding the pump/control panel and costs to inform the project appraisal. She advised the tactical plan had been checked to confirm sufficient grant was eligible to support the scheme. See C2141. Capital Improvement Programme.

C.1239 Clerk's Report

Miss Ablett reported:-

i) Middle Level Commissioners and Administered Boards Chairs Meeting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ii) <u>Application(s) for byelaw consent</u>

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

Name of Applicant	Description of Works	Date of consent
P, SC & R Wilkinson	Construct new access culvert near Point 31	1/11/2022

iii) Association of Drainage Authorities

a) Annual Conference

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b) Annual Conference 2023

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

c) Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch

The Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse ADA Branch was held on Tuesday 7th March 2023

Morning workshops were re-introduced for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak and members who attended took part in an excellent discussion focussed on three topic areas; Fens2100; Water Resources East and Climate Change. Steven Trewhella (consultant to the EA on Fens2100) and Daniel Johns (Chief Exec, WRE) took away a wide range of ideas centred around how the two topics were connected by the work of IDBs.

Within the AGM, Marc Heading was re-appointed as Chairman and Doug McMurdo as Vice Chair with approval that the secretariat of the branch be transitioned from the Middle Level Commissioners to the Bedford Group of IDBs over the coming months. Ian Moodie (Technical Manager, ADA) gave an overview of ADA’s activities, including their important inputs on behalf of IDBs into the long-awaited implementation of schedule 3 of the Floods & Water Management Act. Tom Pickover introduced himself ahead of starting as Operations Manager at the Environment Agency (covering the lower Great Ouse catchment) and was joined by Darren Trumper who between them gave an overview of Environment Agency flood management activities and budgets.

iv) National Drainage Show & Floodex 2023

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

v) Planning and Consenting Fees

Proposed changes to planning and consenting service supply charging

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

1. The current arrangements for charging for Technical Services advice and support, for planning and consenting matters, is based upon a direct cost recovery arrangement. To achieve this all

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

To ensure that a fair assessment is made it is suggested that the last five years of fees are looked at and an average taken. If there is clearly one or two years where one or two planning matters have impacted heavily upon the figures then an appropriate adjustment will be made. The final fee will be converted into a fraction of the costs of overall cost of supplying planning and consenting services for all Boards including the MLC and this percentage will become fixed until such time that a review is called for.

In addition, we will still actively encourage developers and their agents to enter into Pre/Post application contracts. This will help keep the overall planning costs to a minimum. We will also be looking to move more and more to lump sum charges for developers for the same reasons outlined above, ie to reduce internal administration work and costs where possible.

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

2. Many members have noted that the reporting in relation to planning application comments and responses is comprehensive. Again, it often takes many hours to produce such detailed reports for which the Board is charged. This time could be spent in dealing with and taking action on planning and consenting matters. There is also the issue of the potential time lapse between any planning/byelaw issue raising its head and the meeting of the Board. It is of course normally advantageous to take action as soon as possible after any issue had become apparent. It is therefore proposed that going forward the Board nominate who they wish to be copied in on all planning correspondence, for example the Chair and Vice-Chair. They will then be able to liaise with the Planning Engineer if they wish to and will be conversant with discussions being undertaken. The Board may also wish to delegate decision making for initial actions for bylaw infringements to the Board nominee/s.
To ensure that the Board is consulted on the most important matters it is proposed that when it is wished for a matter to be raised within the Board report then a request from the Chair can be made and a detailed report would follow. This would normally be the case where significant costs might be associated with enforcement, including perhaps incurring legal fees or where an unusually large or significant development is proposed.
Should the above change be agreed to, then going forward the Engineer's report will provide a list of all planning applications of interest to the Board and consents applied for/approved but unless requested by the Chair no detail will be provided.

vi) Changes to Electricity Supply Contracts

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

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

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

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

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

The Clerk advised that the Middle Level Commissioners and its administered Boards have entered into a fixed rate energy supply with Corona Energy for an 18-month period from1st April 2023.

vii) Insurance

Historically the number of insurance companies willing to quote for the insurance requirements of the Middle Level Commissioners and administered Boards is limited.

Our insurance portfolio is complex and includes a range of policies that includes Commercial Combined (largest component), Motor Fleet, Engineering & Construction, Terrorism, Management Liability, Marine Craft and Professional Indemnity.
The overall cost of our insurance portfolio for 2023/24 will be £192,275 (£152,373 in 2022/23) a 26% increase, although increases will differ Board by Board depending on their individual insurance needs.

Key factors and changes are highlighted below:

- For Commercial Combined insurance, 2022/23 was the last year in our previous five-year agreement with AXA which included a 7% price reduction woven into the deal. For 2023/24 Towergate, our brokers, approached several companies and all bar AXA were not willing to quote given the size and complexity of our portfolio. Independently we also approached the NFU who declined to quote for the same reason.
- There has been an increase in fleet, property and marine assets included within our cover.

- In view of rising inflation most Boards agreed to index link their insured sums from 1st April 2023. AXA have increased insured sums by 15%, which has resulted in an increase within the overall premium.
- AXA have offered a 2-year stability deal, where any premium increases, subject to claims not exceeding 50% of the written premium, will be capped for 2024/25 at 2.5%. This excludes any increases in sums insured.
- AXA will not extend the stability deal as they plan a review of their whole IDB scheme in 2025.
- Commercial combined policy excess has increased from £350 to £2,500. None of our four 2022/23 claim values were above this new excess.
- Excesses are dictated by AXA's overall scheme for all IDBs and this is apparently now standard and has been imposed due to the number of lower value claims across the whole IDB industry. As other IDB/IDB Groups come out of their previous agreement with AXA the above will apply.

For future years Boards ought to consider index linking their valuations of properties and pumping stations every 3-5 years rather than annually, to mitigate annual premium increases and balancing having suitable cover without being over-insured.

It should also be noted that personal accident and sickness cover only covers employees or members up to 80 years of age. Boards may need to consider the implications of this.

viii) <u>Delegation of signatory on consents</u>

The Board was asked to note that under the Board's scheme of delegation, the Chief Executive has delegated the authority to sign consent on behalf of the Board to the Chief Engineer. As well as the Chief Engineer being better placed to technically assure individual consents, this will enable the them to effectively take ownership over the whole planning and consenting service. This also creates a mechanism for escalation in case of any issues or complaints.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

<u>Planning & Consenting</u>

i) That a lump sum fee arrangement be agreed in principle, but figures to be presented to the Board at their next meeting

ii) That the Consulting Engineer continues to liaise with the Chairman on planning matters and no further detailed reports on individual planning matters are to be provided in the Consulting Engineer's report unless requested by the Chairman.

That the Consulting Engineer sends an email to all Members for larger, more problematic applications or where two or three small developments were being dealt with as one application.

That the Consulting Engineer sees all other applications through to conclusion.

<u>Changes to Electricity Supply Contracts</u>

That the Chairman's actions be approved

C.1240 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

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

March Fifth D.D.C.

Consulting Engineers Report – March 2023

Weed Control and Drain Maintenance

The maintenance and drain works carried out last year generally accorded with the recommendations approved by the Commissioners at their last Annual Meeting.

Harrison Agricultural Contractors carried out the Commissioners' flail mowing requirements last season and have indicated that they are available to undertake them again for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing district drains has been included within the estimate.

Following previous years' requirements and with the Commissioners' approval, the Commissioners' drains immediately upstream of North and South Creek Pumping Stations, reaches 1-2-3 and 20-21, were included in the annual machine cleansing programme. This action was deemed necessary in an attempt to reduce the mass of aquatic weed required to be manually cleaned from the Pumping Stations' weedscreens. It is recommended that a sum is allowed for both reaches to be included again in this year's machine cleansing programme.

A pre-harvest district inspection last summer indicated that the majority of the Commissioners' district drains were in a satisfactory condition and being maintained to a good standard. However, the inspection highlighted sporadic stands of aquatic vegetation throughout the South Creek Pump drains, reach 14-15-16-17 and in agreement with the Chairman these were included in the annual herbicide application and machine cleansing programme.

Unfortunately, the programmed machine cleansing works were cancelled due to a rupture in the Anglia Water (AW) foul water main at Point 18. Significant quantities of raw sewage entered the South Creek catchment, creating a serious environmental incident. AW removed a large quantity of contaminated water from the system until the pollution test levels met their safety parameters to allow the water to be discharged through the Board's South Creek Pump. Evidence of the incident was still visible in the Commissioners' drain and with the Chairman's agreement, the machine cleansing works were postponed and will be carried out this year following the harvest of the adjacent crop.

A recent joint inspection of the Commissioners' district drains was undertaken with the Chairman. The inspection indicated that the majority of drains are currently in a satisfactory condition, however as the Commissioners' annual meeting falls during the early part of the growing season a subsequent district inspection will be required during the summer months to accurately identify any additional drain maintenance requirements.

North Creek Pumped System

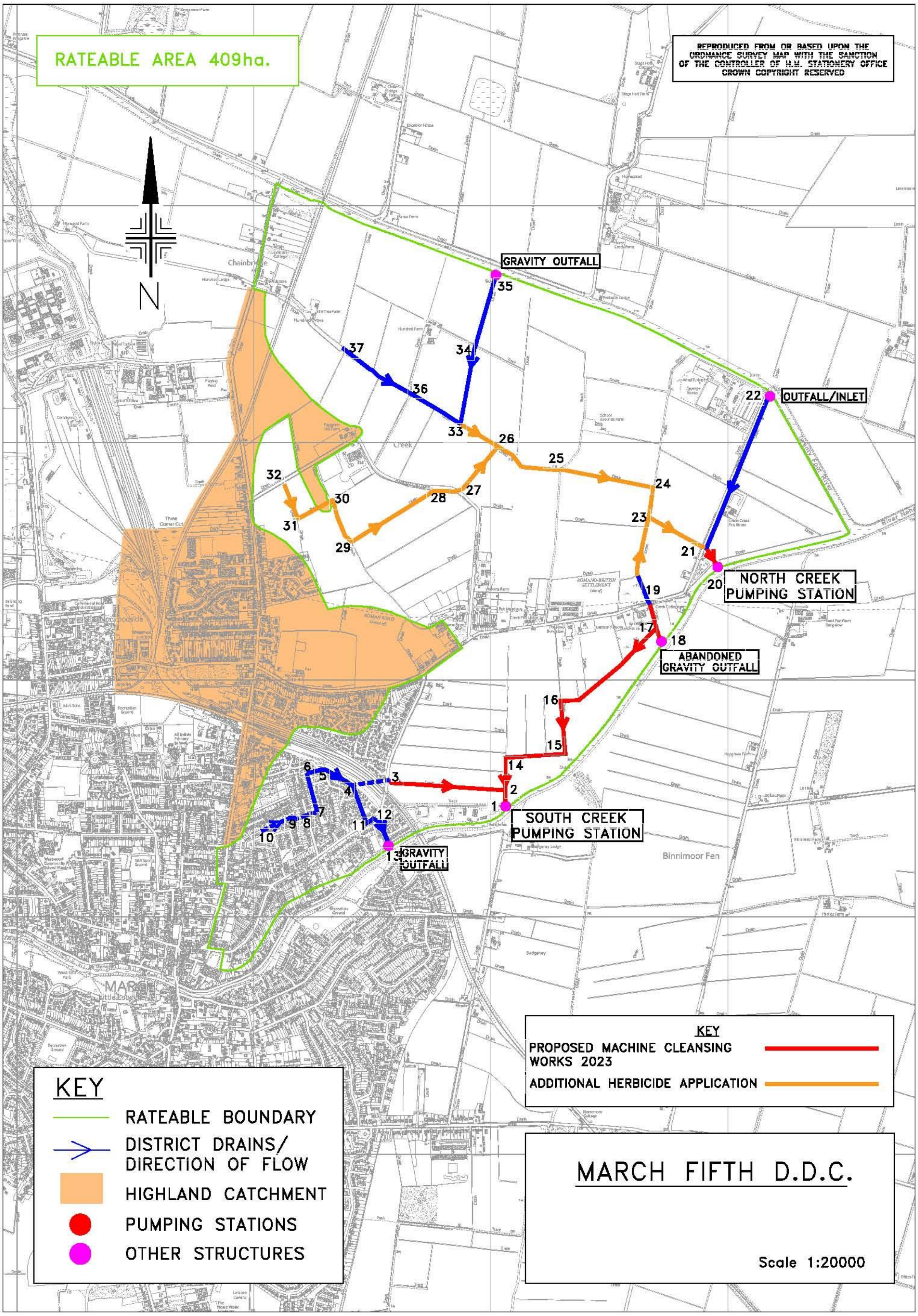
The Commissioners' drains within the North Creek area are in a generally satisfactory condition. The Flagrass Hill drains had little evidence of aquatic vegetation at the time of the inspection and the success of last year's herbicide applications was also evident, a summer inspection will be carried out pre-harvest for any reinfestations that may require an application of herbicide.

South Creek Pumped System

The recent inspection indicated that the Commissioners' drains within the South Creek area are currently in a good condition. Historically district drains in the South Creek area have been prone to late occurring infestations of submerged weed growth, most notably semi-buoyant Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum dermersum*). The annual cleansing of this area has dramatically reduced this issue, however, as mentioned previously reach 1-2-3 will be included in the machine cleansing programme to prevent future issues with large accumulations of aquatic weed at the manually cleaned weedscreen. The machine cleansing works postponed from last year for reach 2-14-15-16-17-18-19, will be reprogrammed for this year following the harvest of the adjacent crop, please see following plan.

Creek Road/Newlands Avenue/Foxglove Way – Gravity System

Watercourses in the Foxglove Way area remain in an exceptionally good condition and it is pleasing to report only small amounts of windblown litter and debris are visible within the drain, and there have been no cases of fly-tipping reported recently. It is envisaged regular visual inspections of drains will continue for the next season to ensure any domestic or household debris being fly-tipped into the Commissioners' watercourse can be dealt with swiftly and to monitor for potential recolonisation of invasive, non-native aquatic vegetation.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SOUTH CREEK PUMPING STATION
GRAVITY OUTFALL
Binnimoor Fen
KEY
PROPOSED MACHINE CLEANSING WORKS 2023
ADDITIONAL HERBICIDE APPLICATION
KEY
RATEABLE BOUNDARY
DISTRICT DRAINS/ DIRECTION OF FLOW
HIGHLAND CATCHMENT
PUMPING STATIONS
OTHER STRUCTURES
MARCH FIFTH D.D.C.
Scale 1:20000

The estimated costs of this year's recommended Weed Control and Drain Maintenance works are shown below, please refer to the previous plan for locations. A provisional sum has also been included within the Commissioners' budget to allow for any emergency machine cleansing, bank slip repair or culvert clearance works required later in the season.

North & South Creek Pumped System				£
1. Flail mowing of District drains	Item	Sum		3200.00
2. Application of Roundup to control emergent weed and reed	Item	Sum		900.00
3. Machine cleanse				
• Reach 1-2-3	Item	Sum		300.00
• Reach 2-14-15-16-17-18-19	1300m	@	1.50	1950.00
• Reach 20-21	Item	Sum		200.00
4. <u>Provisional Item</u> Allowance for any culvert clearance, bank slip repair, emergency or additional machine cleansing that may be deemed necessary later in the year	Item	Sum		1200.00
5. Fees for inspection, preparation and submission of report to the Commissioners, arrangements and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works	Item	Sum		950.00
TOTAL				**£8,700.00**

Orders for the application of herbicides by the MLC are accepted on condition that they will not be held responsible for the failure or efficacy of any treatment.

Pumping Stations

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

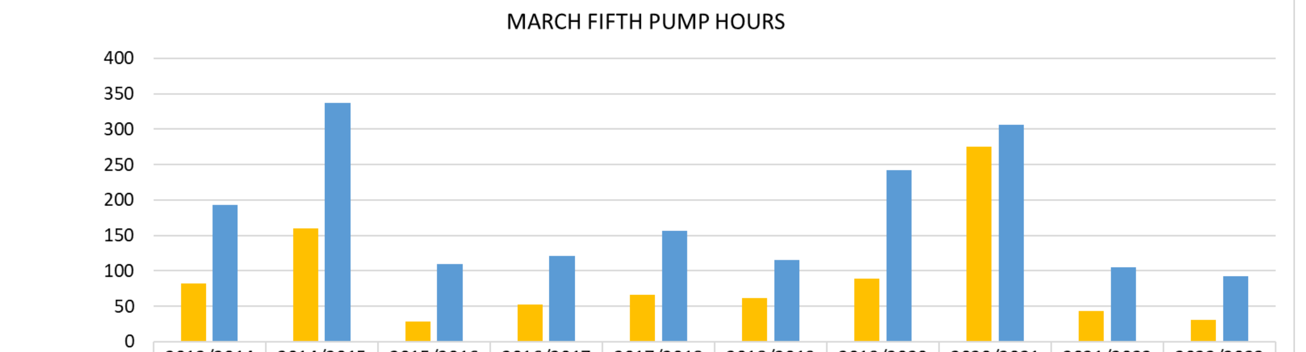
North Creek

The North Creek syphon breaker was removed, polished, lubricated and refitted in July 2022 as it had been sticking.

Preliminary details have been collected regarding the pump/control panel and costs to inform the project appraisal. The tactical plans have been checked to confirm sufficient grant is possible to support the scheme. A business case is programmed for development in 2023, funded via FDGiA.

The Chief Engineer is currently reviewing all pumping station refurbishment projects and their prioritisation. Because there are a number of similar projects, it may be more efficient to deliver the business cases as a package using an external consultant. A scope is currently being written for tender and, subject to costs returned, the consultant will be appointed in June 2023.

Pumping Hours



	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
North Creek	82	160	28	52	66	62	89	275	43	31
South Creek	193	337	110	121	157	115	242	306	105	93

Electricity Readings

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

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

Planning Applications

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

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
525	F/YR22/0491/F	Mrs L Lea	Residence (Extension)	Newlands Avenue, March
526	F/YR22/0590/F	Mr & Mrs M Cable	Residence (Extension)	Cedar Close, March

527	F/YR22/0549/F	Priory Group	Residence (Extension)	Dagless Way, March
528	F/YR22/0723/F	Mr McCullough	Residence (Extension)	Elm Road, March
529	F/YR22/0649/PNMISC	Network Rail	Re-development	March South Down Yard, Station Road, March
530	F/YR22/0736/F	Mrs J Henson	Residence (Extension)	Elm Road, March
531	F/YR22/0755/O	Mr D Upton	Residential (Up to 4 plots [part retrospective])	Flaggrass Hill Road, March
532	F/YR22/0938/PNMISC	Network Rail	Re-development	March South Down Yard, Station Road, March
533	F/YR22/3095/COND	The Glenholme Group	Care Home (56 beds)	Estover Road, March*
534	F/YR22/1112/PIP	Mr Brownlow & Ms Davies	Residential (Up to 4 plots)	Creek Road, March
535	F/YR22/1185/F	Tamara Thompson	Residence	West of Elm Road, access via Marwick Road, March
536	Number not used as enquiry has been transferred to another Board			
537	F/YR22/1250/F	Ashwell Developments	Industrial (3 units light industrial)	Elm Road, March
538	F/YR22/1371/F	Mr P Wilkinson	Residence (Extension)	Wigstones Road, March
539	F/YR22/1414/PIP	Mr Brownlow & Ms Davies	Residential (Up to 3 plots)	Creek Road, March
540	F/YR23/0073/F	Mr & Mrs Ogden	Residence (Extension)	Foxglove Way, March

Planning applications ending 'PNMISC' relate to miscellaneous development Part 18
Planning applications ending 'COND' or 'DISC' relate to the discharge of relevant planning conditions
Planning applications ending 'PIP' and 'IP' relate to Permission in Principle

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

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

A. Ms Lea – Residence at Newlands Avenue, March (MLC Ref No 525) – Self-certification

B. Mr K Ogden – Residence at Foxglove Way, March (MLC Ref No 522) - Checking service

<u>Creek Road/New Park/Station Road area</u>

Redevelopment at March South Down Yard, Station Road, March – Grantrail Ltd (MLC Ref No 145) *& Network Rail* (MLC Ref Nos 529 & 532)

Planning applications FDC Ref Nos F/YR22/0649/PNMISC & F/YR22/0938/PNMISC (MLC Ref Nos 529 & 532) have been submitted by Network Rail to, and subsequently approved by, the District Council for the redevelopment of the existing Maintenance Depot Unit including demolition of existing buildings and the erection of a new modular building and associated works.

When the existing offices were installed in the late 1990s it was understood that surface water disposal was to soakways. During discussions the applicant has advised that surface water from the redeveloped area will be attenuated on site and discharged into the on-site foul sewer system that discharges into the adopted sewer under Station Road.

Further details of this system have been requested together with a robust maintenance plan for the system, to ensure that a lack of maintenance does not cause flooding at the site or to neighbouring sites but some months later this has still not been received.

Theoretically, this solution does not adversely affect the Commissioners' system during normal events but it is recognised that surcharging combined sewers does contribute to flooding within this area of March.

Erection of a 2-storey rear extension and porch to side of existing dwelling New Park, March – Mr L Johnson (MLC Ref Nos 379 & 384) *& Mrs G Clarke* (MLC Ref No 427)

The inspection of the site has yet to be undertaken, but is currently being arranged.

Residential development involving the demolition of existing dwelling at land west of Kinloss, St Johns Chase, March - Mr D Fisher & Executors of Mrs J Easter Deceased (MLC Ref No 393) & *Solar Savings 4 U Ltd* (MLC Ref Nos 424, 431 & 443)

This site was completed some time ago and the dwellings are occupied.

Creek Fen Area

Provision of a storm tank at March Water Recycling Centre (WRC), Creek Fen Road, March – Anglian Water Services Ltd (MLC Ref No 503)

In response to a query during spring last year Anglian Water advised that they considered that consent was not required from the Middle Level Commissioners as the tank was outside of the 20m wide maintenance access strip.

During this correspondence reference was made to the vehicles accessing the WRC which overrun the road and encroach on the District Drain (Point 22) and MLC advised that the Commissioners are concerned that further encroachment will result in:

i. The failure of the channel profile which would create a flood risk until it is repaired.

ii. A vehicle entering the watercourse resulting in potential injury and damage to the watercourse concerned.

A request was made that appropriate works be taken to alleviate the overrun and reduce the risk posed to the Commissioners' system but no positive response has been received.

As can be seen from the photograph (left) the edge of the overrun is in close proximity to the brink of the Commissioners' District Drain. It is suggested that an approach be made to Anglian Water in order to resolve this issue.

A view of the overrun at the entrance to March WRC (Point 22) looking south

Residential development adjacent to Hillcroft, Creek Road, March

Land to the west - Peter Humphrey Associates (MLC Ref No 223); *Mr Brownlow & Ms Davis* (MLC Ref No 534) & *Land to the east - Mr Brownlow & Ms Davis* (MLC Ref No 539)

Planning applications have been submitted for Permission in Principle (PIP) for four dwellings to the west and three dwellings to the east of Hillcroft.

No means of drainage were proposed on the submission documents but correspondence was received from the applicants' agent, Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd, asking whether the above developments could discharge treated foul effluent water from private treatment plants into the adjacent watercourse network.

The applicant was advised that a connection to the adopted sewer system, the nearest point to which is to the south west of the site, will be required.

Permission was granted by the District Council in February.

The sites are in close proximity to an area of historic flooding and land that has poorly drained during relatively low events.

Elm Road Area

Erection of 30 dwellings (max) east of Berryfield, Berryfield, March – The Wilkinson Family (MLC Ref Nos 392, 396 & 471) *& FPP Facades* (MLC Ref No 498)

Further to the Commissioners' last Meeting Report an enquiry was received from the applicants requesting an update on the completion of the channel improvement works, they were advised that this had been undertaken following harvest 2021 and that an invoice had been sent to, and paid by, the applicant to cover the Commissioners' costs.

Construction of the properties alongside the boundary with the existing Berryfields estate has commenced on site.

Residential development at Highfield House, Elm Road, March – Mrs E Wilkinson (MLC Ref Nos 432 & 520)

Outline planning permission was granted by Fenland District Council for Ref No F/YR21/1105/O (MLC Ref No 520) subject to the imposition of planning conditions including surface water disposal.

A permeable paving and sub-base system has been proposed for surface water disposal.

Erection of 1 x 3-storey 6-bed and 3 x 2-storey 4-bed dwellings with garages at land north of Elm House, Elm Road, March – Mr & Mrs Coe (MLC Ref Nos 436, 475, 484, 508 & 509)

Further to the previous Meeting Report, further investigation undertaken by the applicants' consultant confirmed that the watercourse forming the north western boundary of Elm Road was blocked further to the south and thus not directly connected to the Commissioners' system.

A potential solution may be provided by the Innerspace Home Group Ltd site if it proceeds. See MLC Ref No 518 below.

The current situation is as follows:

Plot 1 (200 Elm Road) – (MLC Ref No 508)

An application for Discharge Consent was received in February 2022, relating to the disposal of treated foul effluent water from the property. The Discharge Consent application was subsequently refused.

Plot 2 (198 Elm Road) – (MLC Ref No 509)

A Discharge Consent application form for the disposal of both surface and treated foul effluent water was received from the applicants in May. However, the applicant's agent MTC Engineering (Cambridge) Ltd [MTC] was advised that consent would not be issued. Details of attenuation facilities or the use of soakaways is awaited.

Plot 3 (196 Elm Road) – (MLC Ref No 484)

A Discharge Consent application was received and a positive recommendation was made to the Commissioners' Clerk in August 2021, before it was identified that the watercourse was not connected to the Commissioners' system.

Plot 4 (194 Elm Road) – (MLC Ref No 475)

The applicant advised that both surface and treated foul effluent water was discharging to infiltration devices. There is an ongoing discussion with the applicant's agent, MTC, regarding the use of the Infiltration Device Checking Service.

Erection of a cold storage building including plant rooms, 6no loading docks, 14no vehicle charging points, 2 no condensers and new hardstanding at Marwick Road, March - March Cold Stores Ltd (MLC Ref No 455)

This development has not commenced and the previously granted planning permission has expired.

Developments at and adjacent to March Braza Club, Elm Road, March

A. *Erection of single-storey rear extension and relocation of external staircase to rear of existing building involving demolition of existing shed and removal of lorry container – The Braza Club Ltd* (MLC Ref No 478)

   In response to the issuing of an "advisory letter", the applicants' agent, Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd, have advised that the erection of the extension has not yet commenced and that the Commissioners will be advised of the means of water disposal in due course.

B. *Erect 6 no dwellings (2 x single storey 3-bed and 4 x 2-storey 3-bed) involving formation of a new access at land north of March Braza Club (Lavender Close), Elm Road, March* (MLC Ref No 480)

An application for Discharge Consent for the disposal of treated foul effluent water only was received in April 2022 together with a Soakaway Checking Service application. The content is currently being considered.

However, as can be seen from the photograph below the site is complete and the dwellings are occupied.

View of Lavender Close looking toward Elm Road

In addition, documents to be included in the Deed of Sale, confirming the long-term ownership funding, management and maintenance arrangements, that meet the Commissioners' satisfaction, for the upkeep of any water level and flood risk management system have not been provided.

Erect 1 x block of 4 x industrial units (Class E(g)(iii) - light industrial) involving the demolition of existing building, and the construction of an internal road access road to existing unit including the relocation of external door at Gravel House, Elm Road, March - Mr P Grice (MLC Ref No 300); *JMC Construction P S Ltd* (MLC Ref No 366); *Ashwell Developments* (MLC Ref No 493 & 537)

Further to the last Meeting Report, planning permission was granted for planning application FDC Ref No F/YR20/0838/F (MLC Ref No 493). A subsequent planning application FDC Ref No F/YR22/1250/F (MLC Ref No 537) featuring a revised layout was also granted planning permission. Both were subject to the imposition of planning conditions including both surface and treated foul effluent water.

Erect a dwelling (2-storey, 3-bed), detached single garage and boundary fence 1.5m high (max) and temporary mobile home during construction involving demolition of existing dwelling at Elm Tree Farm, Elm Road, March – Mr R Smith (MLC Ref No 510)

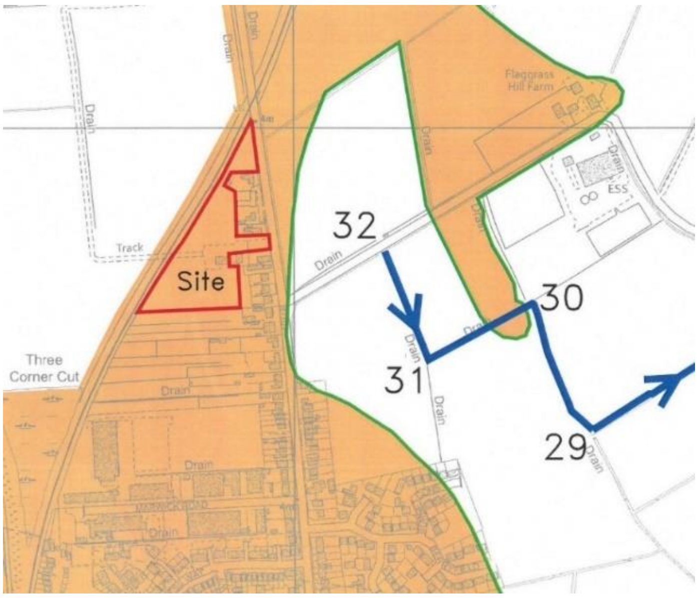
The current position is being ascertained.

Hybrid Application: Full application to erect 41 x dwellings (1 x 2-storey 2-bed, 28 x 2-storey 3-bed and 12 x 2-storey 4-bed) with associated parking, landscaping, and a new access, and Outline application with matters committed in respect of access for the erection of up to 2 x dwellings on land to the west of 180 to 200 Elm Road, March - Innerspace Home Group Ltd (MLC Ref No 518)

According to the relevant District Council web page on Public Access this application is "Pending Consideration" and has not yet been determined.

There has been a considerable interchange between various parties concerning flood risk and drainage related issues. The Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer has kept a "watching brief" on these but has not formally responded as yet.

It is understood that the applicant has agreed to install a culvert under Elm Road but it is not known whether the appropriate approvals have been sought from the County Highways Team or the land owners affected.



Location plan

<u>Estover Road Area</u>

Regeneration of playing field to include: erection of a single-storey pavilion, formation of a car park ; netball courts/multi-games use courts; hard-standing for external terrace and walkways; siting of 3 x storage containers; erection of 4.5m high (max height) mesh fencing bounding both the football pitch and netball court and the erection of 4 x 8.0m high lighting columns to car park and footpaths; 6 x 10.0m high floodlights to netball courts and 6 x 15.0m high floodlights to football pitch at Playing Field, Estover Road, March – Estover Playing Fields 2015 CIC (MLC Ref No 440)

A recent reminder has been sent to the applicant to ascertain the current position.

Re-development of W H Feltham and Son Limited, Estover Road, March – Mr S Thomas (MLC Ref No 488) and the *Glenholme Group* (MLC Ref Nos 505, 521, 524 & 533)

Further to the last meeting a Discharge of Conditions application was submitted to the District Council in respect of surface water disposal FDC Ref No F/YR22/3095/COND (MLC Ref No 533). It is proposed to use a combination of permeable paving and storage crates governed by a hydraulic control before discharging into the existing Anglian Water sewer under Peterhouse Close.

Since the last meeting the rate of discharge has been reduced from 5l/s down to 2l/s, significantly below the previously unregulated discharge from the factory site.

The former factory building has been demolished and work on the care home has commenced.

Documents to be included in a Deed of Sale, confirming the long-term ownership funding, management and maintenance arrangements, that meet the Commissioners' satisfaction, for the upkeep of any water level and flood risk management system have not been provided.

<u>Norwood Road Area</u>

Erect up to 52 x flats (outline application with all matters reserved) at the Lorry Park, Norwood Industrial Estate, Norwood Road, March - Goldstar Traders Ltd (MLC Ref No 502)

No subsequent planning application, for the re-development of the lorry park, has been submitted.

<u>District Wide</u>

March to Wisbech Transport Corridor (Previously known as the Re-opening of the March to Wisbech Rail-line - Scheme No 398128) (Wisbech Rail) (MLC Ref No 477)

The current position is being ascertained with the Combined Authority.

Future March - Investing in the potential of March - March Area Transport Study (MATS) Public Consultation May/June 2020 - March Options Assessment Report (OAR) - Cambridgeshire County Council (MLC Ref No 487)

No further correspondence has been received and no further action has been taken in respect of the Commissioners' interests.

It is understood that:

A. Of the nine options for the Eastern Bypass/new river crossing all were rejected due to poor value for money as a result of high construction costs and projected low usage.

B. The "quick wins" for traffic and highway improvements, such as the zebra crossing at Station Road have been completed. None of these appear to adversely affect the Commissioners' system.

C. A mini roundabout is to be placed at the junction of Station Road and Creek Road to reduce delay at this junction, presumably in conjunction with the proposed works to Broad Street.

D. The schemes for Peas Hill, Twenty Foot Road and St Peters Road, and also the preliminary designs for Northern Industrial Link Road, which are all outside of the Commissioners' catchment, are now moving ahead through detailed design with a Full Business Case expected soon.

Planning Updates & Consultations

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

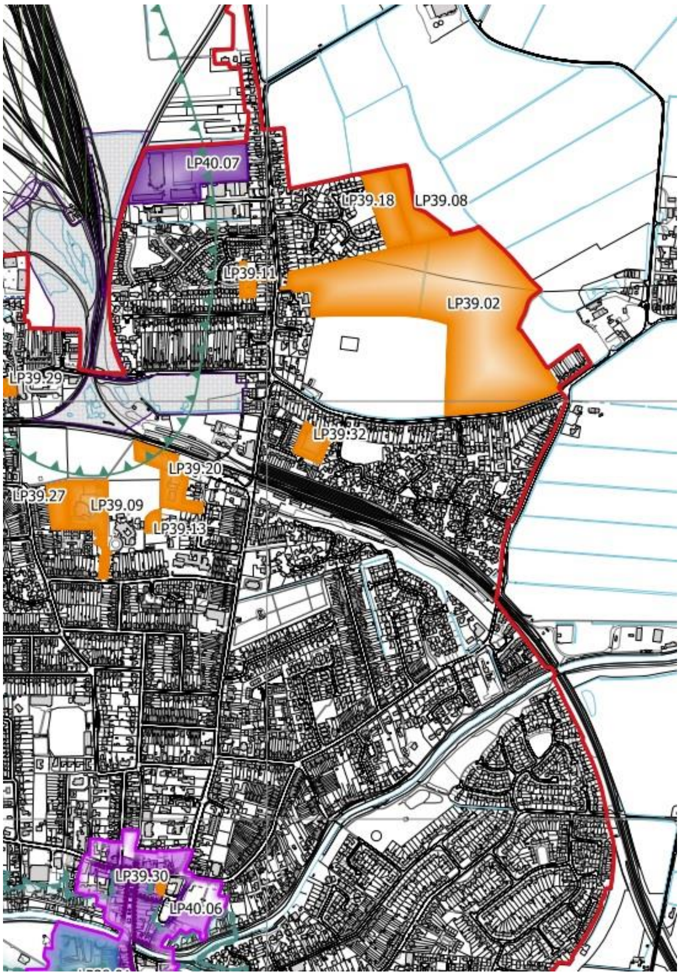
All responses to consultation documents were made on behalf of both the Middle Level Commissioners and its associated Boards.

Emerging Fenland Local Plan

The draft Local Plan which sets out the emerging policies and proposals for growth and regeneration, and the "proposed sites" to deliver this growth, was the subject of a Public Participation Consultation during September and October.

Proposed sites within the Commissioners' catchment

The "proposed sites", as shown on the extract below from the Draft Policies Map (August 2022) March (Inset 16) are:



Extract from the Draft Policies Map (August 2022) March (Inset 16) showing the proposed sites in the Commissioners' catchment

A. Policy Reference LP39.02 (SHELAA (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) Site reference 40252) – Land south east of 433 Wisbech Road – 294 dwellings.

   This site includes the area of land that was the subject of a previous planning application FDC Ref No F/YR15/0668/O (MLC Ref No 408) for 95 dwellings which was refused planning permission by FDC and for which an appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate.

B. Policy Reference LP39.08 (SHELAA Site reference 40126) – East of Berryfields – 24 dwellings

This relates to an extension of the development that is currently being built (MLC Ref Nos 392, 396, 471 & 498). The north eastern boundary would abut the current floodplain extent as shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning.

C. Policy Reference LP39.11 (SHELAA Site reference 40434) – Land fronting Elm Road and south and west of Highfield House – 9 dwellings

This site currently has outline planning permission for four dwellings (MLC Ref Nos 432 & 520)

D. Policy Reference LP39.18 (SHELAA Site reference 40011) – Land East of Berryfield – 28 dwellings

This site is currently being developed by FPP Facades (MLC Ref Nos 392, 396, 471 & 498)

E. Policy Reference LP39.32 (SHELAA Site reference 40524) – W H Feltham and Son, Cawood Close – 9 dwellings.

This site is currently being developed by the Glenholme Group (MLC Ref Nos 488, 505, 521, 524 & 533).

F. Policy Reference LP40.07 (SHELAA Site reference 40420) – March Cold Stores Limited, 20 - 24 Marwick Road – 3 Ha. B8 Storage & distribution

This site was the subject of a previous planning permission FDC Ref No F/YR17/1147/F (MLC Ref No 455).

Response to the Consultation

A response was submitted to FDC on behalf of both the MLC and the associated Boards with catchments within the Council's area and included comments on:

The Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside – Frontage Infill Development
Growth Strategy – Neighbourhood Areas;
Health and Well-being; Renewable Energy – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure
Design and Amenity – Policy LP 7: Design – Nature, Public Spaces, Homes and Buildings + Policy LP 11: Community Safety
Housing – Policy LP 12: Meeting Housing Needs - Homes for Permanent Caravan Dwellers/Park Homes and Boat Dwellers

Town Centres – Policy LP 17: Culture, Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities - Community Facilities

Transport and Infrastructure – Strategic Infrastructure, Transport Infrastructure, Community Infrastructure, Wisbech Rail, Wisbech Access Strategy, Whittlesey Relief Road, Local Projects, Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

Natural Environment – Policy LP 24: Natural Environment - Designated Sites, Local Sites, Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, Biodiversity and Geodiversity in development, Mitigation of Potential Adverse Impacts of Development

Policy LP 25: Biodiversity Net Gain + Policy LP 26: Carbon Sinks and Carbon Sequestration - Trees & Hedgerows + Table 8: Landscape Character Areas + Policy LP 29: Green Infrastructure

Flood and Water Management - Policy LP 32: Flood and Water Management

Specific comments included:

Disappointment was expressed that most of the contents of Part (B) Flood Risk and Drainage of Policy LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland within the current Local Plan have not been included in this policy contained within the draft Local Plan 2021-2040. As a result, it is considered that the new policy is much weaker which is disappointing given the special water level and flood risk management requirements within the Fens.

Concerns were raised about the piecemeal development encountered within the Council's area, for example, along Upwell Road in March or the Bridge Lane area in Wimblington, which is resulting in many small and isolated attenuation systems which will be difficult to maintain and will be a future liability for the parties concerned, the failure of which could potentially increase flood risk. The Council was advised that the Middle Level Commissioners and associated Boards would prefer more holistic solutions to be utilised such as the pond excavated by Hutchinson's in conjunction with the Hundred of Wisbech IDB which will serve several developments in the area close to the A47/Cromwell Road junction.

Policies for Sites and Settlements

When responding to similar documents it has been noted that having prepared detailed responses to specific site allocations, which has taken a significant amount of officer time and expense, the responses made are ignored.

Therefore, as a result, with a few exceptions detailed responses on individual sites were not prepared but a list of minimum requirements that need to be considered was provided when determining the suitability of a proposed site.

Specific responses

Specific responses were made on the following sites:

Policy LP 6:	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure – Site Allocations LP06.01 SHELAA Site reference 40468 - 98.79 ha at Coldham Wind Farm, Elm + LP06.02 SHELAA Site reference 40469 174.29 ha at land adjacent to Graysmoor Drove, Elm.
Policy LP36:	Residential site allocations for Wisbech (Page 118) (Map 28 Wisbech (Inset))
Policy LP46:	Residential site allocations in Chatteris (Page 137) (Map 02 Chatteris (Inset))

Next Steps

All comments received during the consultation period are being reviewed with any changes arising being made to the draft Local Plan.

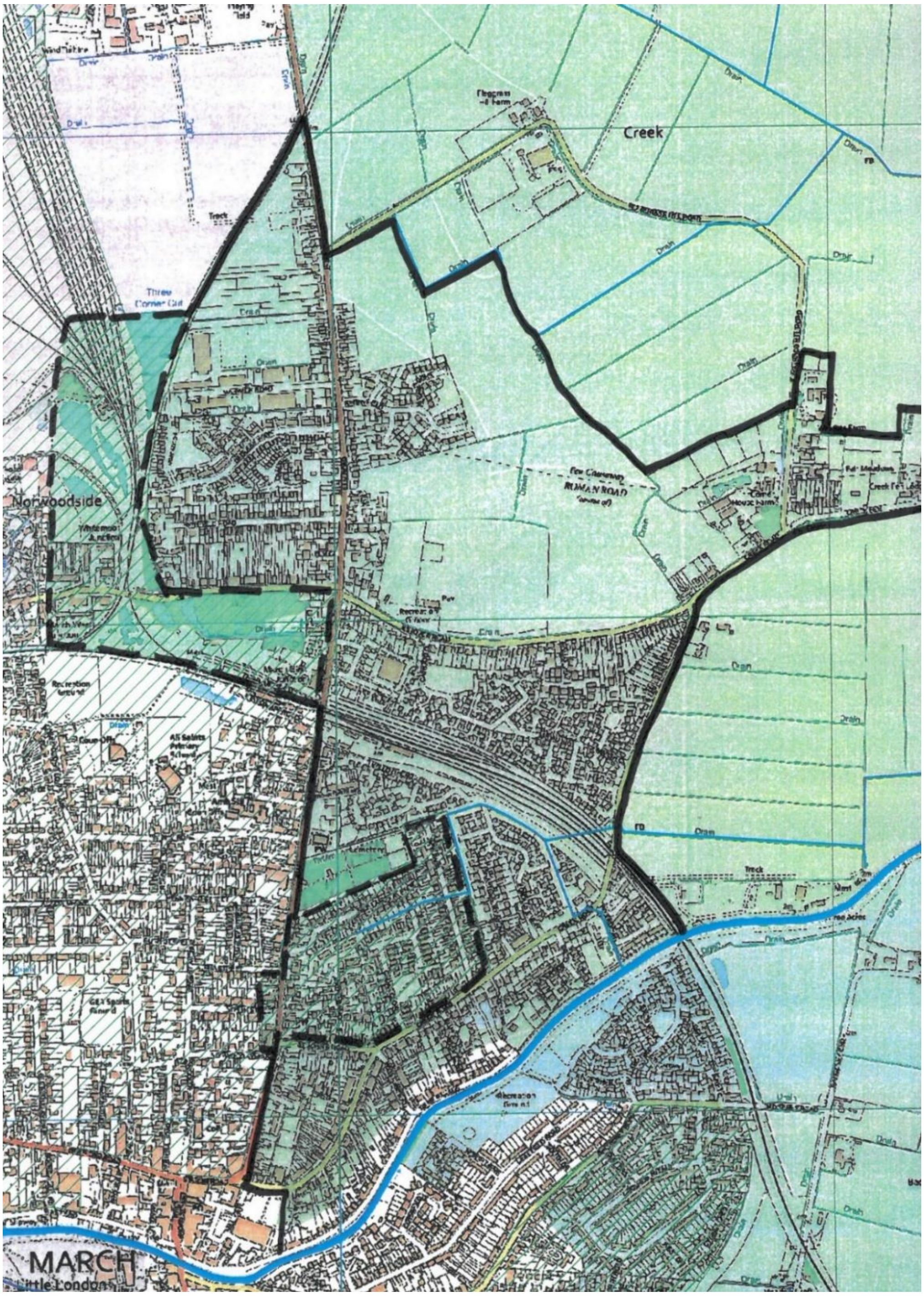
A Proposed Submission version is due to be published in summer 2023 for public consultation. This version of the plan will then be submitted together with any responses to the Secretary of State who will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to carry out a public examination into the document. **It is presumed that, in a similar manner to previous developments, the Commissioners will wish to continue to raise concerns about the adverse impacts of growth and development within and affecting its catchment.**

High Rainfall Event and Flooding Incident – December 2020

The Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer has raised concerns about the issues experienced within the town during or following high rainfall and/or exceptional circumstance type events and has enquired of other partners whether given the time that has elapsed any progress is being made to resolve some of the issues.

Following some consideration, the previous critical area extents, shown hatched and edged with a dashed line on the following extract, which were determined based on historical knowledge, including the August 2014 event, has been amended to include all of the town's current urban area together with proposed and potential sites, edged in a solid black line. As a result, apart from in the most exceptional circumstances, all surface water discharges within this area must be attenuated to current volumes and/or greenfield rates of run off, where practicable.

Following discussions, colleagues within the Middle Level Commissioners' Works Department advise that following the December 2020 event the MLC system took up to ten days and IDB systems up to five days to return to normal.



Plan extract showing the extent of the previous and revised critical areas

It is also considered that current surface water design practices do not allow for the weather conditions experienced prior to the December 2020 event or the complex network of water level and flood risk management systems within the Fens. Therefore, consideration is being given to requiring designs to:

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

Strategic Drainage and Wastewater consultation and issues

A. The Right to Connect

Members will recall that during the passage of the Environment Act through the House of Lords an amendment was sought which aimed to minimise the impact of new housing development on levels of local flood risk and the likelihood of storm discharges of untreated sewerage effluent into the water environment. It aimed to ensure housing developers design systems according to a hierarchy of drainage options that seek to reduce to a minimum the volume of rainwater entering combined sewerage systems removing the current "right to connect" to public sewers.

On the basis that the various RMA involved could have been asked to consider taking the opportunity to write to the government and voice their concerns over the right to connect for new developments the views of the Boards administered by the Middle Level Commissioners were sought.

The amendment was not moved and the House of Lords were not invited to take a decision on it. The Environment Act received Royal Assent in November 2021.

However, the results of the Boards who provided a positive response is as follows:

For the removal of the Right To Connect	54%
Against the removal of the Right To Connect	23%
Neither for or against the Right To Connect	18%
Not an issue for the Board	5%

The discharge from sewers can cause several challenges including increased flood risk, pollution and water quality issues, the solution to which is often at the rate payers' expense. Unsurprisingly the majority, but not all, of the Boards supporting the removal of the right either served or were detrimentally affected by areas of urban development.

Of those Boards against the removal some only served small urban areas with a limited number of sewers. Others served urban areas but only one received significant "benefit".

The Board that neither opposes nor supports the removal served a significant urban area but the remainder served a limited number of, or have no, adopted sewers within their catchments.

Other comments received expressed:

A. Concerns about the lack of investment and the need for improvement to the existing adopted infrastructure and;

B. Suggested that the permission to connect should be on an approval basis so that it can be controlled and any impacts managed and;

C. Required the Clerk to promote and lobby the Board's position.

Some Boards are more rural whilst others feature a larger urban area. Similarly, a larger individual Board may be predominantly rural but include a sub-catchment(s) which is largely, and increasingly, an urban environment which has to accommodate the resultant flows.

Therefore, it is considered that it would be difficult to have a simple yes/no solution within a complex system such as The Fens.

B. <u>Anglian Water Drainage & Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP)</u>

Draft DWMP

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

1. <u>Draft DWMP Consultation</u>

The draft DWMP document has been the subject of a consultation which provided an opportunity to comment on the document and included the following specific points:

<u>Groundwater infiltration & surface water removal</u>

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

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

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

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

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

Water level Management Solutions

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

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

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

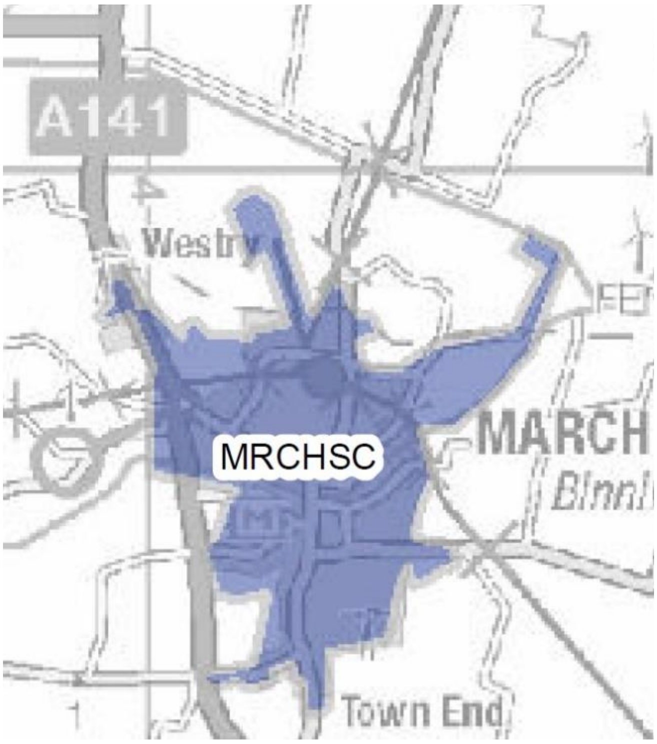
As the approval and consent of other RMAs may also be required, prior detailed consultation with the parties involved MUST be undertaken and agreed BEFORE work commences.

Partnership Working

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

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

2. Programme outputs



Extract from Anglian Water's Risk Based Catchment Screening (RBCS) Map showing the extent of the catchment served by March WRC

March

How it started

All BRAVA themes assessed.

Stakeholders identified existing flood risk and ongoing projects.

Future Fens Strategy.

Medium term plans (by 2035)

Network - Mixed strategies with main solution of SuDs.

Long term plans (2050)

25% surface water removal.

Partnership working

Extracts from Anglian Water's draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan showing the results and proposed plans for March WRC

L3 water recycling catchment	2021 population	2035 population	2050 population	Passed RBCS	Resilience risk score
Escape from sewers WRC compliance Environment and wellbeing	Identified in FRMP. Flood action group. Embankment scheme identified. Future Fens Strategy.	Network - Mixed strategies with main solution of SuDs	25% surface water removal.	Yes	

March WRC

This WRC currently serves a population of 21662. An increase in population across the catchment of 4379 (20%) by 2050 was used in the BRAVA/RBCS process. Several concerns were raised during the process and a mixed strategy has been proposed for the medium term. This is likely to involve the removal of surface water from the combined system network, which has been the cause of significant flooding during recent events, by utilising SuDS facilities. However, it is not certain where these will be located given the dense urban environment or who will be responsible for these. The longer term strategy is to remove 25% of surface water by 2050.

WRC Compliance

The quality of the discharge does not appear to be a cause for concern. However, members will be aware of Natural England's concerns about nutrients affecting the aquatic environment.

3. Storm Overflow Consultation

A consultation exercise on Storm Overflow Discharges was held during February. In view of the concerns discussed above it was considered appropriate to consult all the administered Boards even though many would not be directly affected.

The main means of providing a response was to provide answers to five specific questions and, whilst responses were provided, in view of the nature of the matter; the responses received from the Boards consulted and given that the issue is rising up the political agenda it was considered that a more detailed and focused response was required.

The following are the headlines or a brief resume of the response:

A. Existing sewer systems and problems

1. The Right to Connect – As discussed elsewhere in this Report
2. Other issues – On going pollution problems, the surcharging of or high discharges during or following high rainfall events, the lack of capacity within WRCs.

B. General

It is considered that all the current targets are too vague and will take too long to achieve any meaningful results and that the consultation was not open and transparent as the locations of the points of discharge are not readily identified within the document, therefore making it difficult to provide a meaningful comment.

Advice was given that:

Most of our systems are pumped often remaining stationary for extended periods thus dilution may not occur as expected; water is abstracted for various purposes – see High Priority Sites – Public Health below; the adverse impact on areas of interest including designated environmental sites; and that no “compensation” is provided for having to receive, transfer and dispose of the discharges from the overflows.

C. Storm Flow Technical Overview

High Priority Sites

1. <u>Ecology</u>

a. *Environment targets*

It is considered that these targets should apply to **<u>all</u>** sites not just high priority ones, with solutions implemented much sooner than identified if the Government’s target of halting biodiversity decline is to be achieved and the goals of the Water Framework Directive and the 25 year environment plan are to be achieved.

b. Sensitive Inland Water

Reference was made to the proximity of trigger points.

2. <u>Public Health</u>

The document refers to Designated Shellfish Water and Designated Bathing Water as trigger points which is understood, but it is not appreciated that vast quantities of water are abstracted from Fenland water level management systems for agricultural use, whether this is washing or irrigating crops for consumption within the food chain.

It was suggested that it would be prudent for the trigger points to be reviewed to include those other items which could affect public health on a wider scale.

Potable Water

Reference was made concerning the use of excess water from both the Commissioners’ and surrounding systems to fill the proposed Fens Reservoir and the potential benefits of improving water quality from the discharges into these watercourses.

3. <u>Amenity</u>

Emphasis is given to bathing waters but no reference is made to other wider but perhaps smaller benefits on the Commissioners’ largely navigable systems and the disposal of sewage into these watercourses may have an adverse impact on wider issues, for example, tourism, angling etc or if these wider “costs” are considered when assessing the adverse impacts of overflows on the local area.

4. <u>Assessing spill frequency</u>

   Event data Monitors

   a. From a closer review it was identified that some of the discharges of interest including Doddington, Nightlayers and Ramsey WRCs are not fitted with Event Data Monitors. Therefore, it is not known how the number of spills can be fully assessed.

      Event Duration Monitors will be installed on all of Anglian Water’s overflows during Asset Management Plan (AMP) period 7 (2020-2025) and this will, hopefully, reduce the level of uncertainty during AMP 8 (2025-2030) and AMP 9 (2030-2035) by producing “real” data.

   b. Rainfall target: Storm overflows will not be permitted to discharge above an average of 10 rainfall events per year by 2050 but this target should be more defined including restriction on the duration of spills and the volume discharged. This may be difficult to achieve. The Standard of Protection (SoP) provided, the use of “typical” rather than excessive rainfall events and modelling of the various systems to identify potential problem overflows rather than actual data – the number of spills, duration of the spills etc was questioned.

   Growth

   The growth that has occurred in the last fifty years has contributed to the increased number and length of spills and this will only become more severe as further growth continues unless adequate steps are taken <u>now</u> to resolve these as a matter of urgency.

   Climate Change

   It would be appropriate for all RMAs to prepare for the worst-case scenario and there is an aspiration to achieve this but this could be expensive, may prove unnecessary and wasteful leading to criticism. It was suggested that the most economic and environmentally acceptable standard should be achieved.

   Screening

   It would be beneficial to know where these initial overflows are located.

D. Storm Overflow Consultation

<u>Performance Guide</u>

It appears that priority is given to the number of spills rather than the length of time of the discharge, the volume of flow being discharged or the cumulative effects of the overflows due to their close proximity to each other.

Preferred Plan

It would be beneficial if the "headlines" from assessments and guidance on suggested solutions could be provided to identify and instigate any early engagement with the parties concerned, for example, land owners, developers etc.

Customer Support

Reference was made in the document to continual engagement with customers but there appears to be limited engagement with those RMA who have to receive the flows from the storm overflows.

It was suggested that such engagement commences and both the Commissioners and associated Boards look forward to continual engagement and transparency on storm overflows and networks in the future.

E. Consultation Questionnaire

The answers to the questionnaire were generally included in the response, but in reply to the question *How confident are you that this strategy aligns with our Purpose?* A very low confidence comment was provided adding that some of the systems cannot be managed without significant investment and improvement works being required on several networks.

F. Summary

Whilst it pleasing that the issue of sewage overflows is being progressed this appears to be primarily due to political pressure rather than at the instigation of the water industry.

There are concerns that priority will be given to resolving issues associated with storm overflows rather than those existing problems associated with WRCs and associated systems.

Greater transparency, early engagement and further discussions should be undertaken to any issues related to adoptable sewer systems and storm overflows if the current problems are to be resolved.

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

G. <u>Review for implementation of Schedule 3 to The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (F&WMA)</u>

The Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) details the provision of comprehensive flood management to protect people, homes, and businesses. It is written to protect water supplies to the consumer and helps safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges. The Act introduces into law the concept of flood risk management as the preferred approach rather than reliance on flood defences (existing or proposed) for protection of sites.

1. Schedule 3

   Schedule 3 of the FWMA was introduced to establish a SuDS approving body (SAB) at the county/unitary level for the regulation of new development and compliance with The Act. It was intended that this Schedule would be introduced into law around 2015/2016, following the original Act that achieved royal ascent in 2010 but this did not happen and Schedule 3 did not achieve approval due to concerns that it would restrict housing delivery and growth.

   Instead, the government made amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) to stipulate those decisions on planning applications relating to major developments (over 10 dwellings, or equivalent non-residential developments) should ensure that SuDS are put in place, unless demonstrated to be inappropriate. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) currently need to approve drainage schemes and ensure they are appropriately maintained.

   Currently the maintenance of a development typically falls under the responsibility of a Private Maintenance Company (PMC) which is usually paid for using service charge agreements with the owners of the new properties and often selling residential properties as leasehold rather than freehold.

2. Review

   In early December industry experts sent an open letter to the Prime Minister which “strongly urged” the implementation of Schedule 3.

   Following a review, DEFRA announced in January 2023, the government’s decision to implement Schedule 3 which will provide a framework for the approval and adoption of high quality SuDS and is expected to occur at a yet to be determined date in 2024. As a result, the Government is giving consideration to how this will be implemented subject to final decisions on scope, threshold and process whilst being mindful of the cumulative impact of new regulatory burdens on the development sector and water industry. Defra recently undertook a consultation survey with LPAs and LLFAs but not with IDBs and other relevant parties. However, there are several issues and challenges that require resolution before progressing further.

3. Changes to existing laws

   The implementation of Schedule 3 will introduce some small changes to three existing laws.

a) Building Act 1984

Section 59 which gives local authorities the power to request that sustainable drainage systems in an unsatisfactory condition be renewed, repaired or cleansed is to be amended.

Section 84 which stipulates that local authorities withhold the right to request that impermeable surfaces around a building which do not allow for the satisfactory drainage of its surface or subsoil be remedied requires amendment to specify that surfaces need to remove water in a satisfactory manner.

b) New Roads and Street Works Act 1991

Section 63 will include a small change should Schedule 3 be enacted.

c) Water Industry Act 1991

Section 106 to remove the right to connect. Following Schedule 3's commencement, a person may only exercise this right if their drainage system was approved by an SAB before construction and if a proposal for their drainage system to communicate with a sewer was included in their application for approval.

The NPPF and the associated PPG will require amending to reflect any changes.

4. Implementation

Whilst there will be some changes to current procedures it is considered that there are several potential benefits including better working practices, better integration with other RMA, the removal of the automatic right to connect, potential revenue streams etc but there are several potential problems that need to be resolved including funding mechanisms; potential increased costs on the rate payer; lack of resources, skills and capabilities; the need for more timely responses possibly taking staff members from other work.

The proposal is the subject of on-going discussions and a meeting with the LLFAs and other partners has been requested to discuss the issues in order to maximise any opportunities and minimise any adverse impacts on both the Middle Level Commissioners and the Boards to whom it provides a planning consultancy service.

These discussions will include, as a minimum:

a) The suggested change in surface water design practice, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

b) Ensuring that adequate arrangements are made for long term ownership funding, management and maintenance arrangements for the upkeep of any water level and flood risk management system, whether on or off site, in perpetuity including details of the works to be carried out by the occupier/land owner, adopting authority, the Management Company or other responsible person/authority, together with the costs attached, are included in the "Homeowners Pack" and the Deed of Sale.

c) The right to connect needs to be on an approval basis to ensure that it can be controlled and any adverse impacts managed.

d) That any incurred costs on the rate payer are kept to a minimum.

General Advice

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

(a) P, S C & R Wilkinson – An application for Byelaw consent to construct a me access culvert using a 1.2m diameter pipe 12m long near to Point 31 was recommended for approval.

31 March 2023 Consulting Engineer

March Fifth (314)\Reports\March 2023

Mr Lakey reported on the works undertaken last year.

Miss Ablett referred to the planning application for the provision of a Storm tank at March Recycling Centre, Creek Road (MLC Ref No. 503) and advised that a request had been made for works to be undertaken to alleviate the overrun and reduce the risk posed to the Commissioners system, but no positive response has been received. She advised the Planning Engineer had suggested that an approach be made to Anglian Water in order to resolve the issue. Members agreed for the Planning Engineer to liaise with Anglian water.

Miss Ablett referred to the residential development adjacent to Hillcroft, Creek Road, March (MLC Ref. Nos. 223, 534 & 539) and advised the developer had asked whether the developments could discharge treated foul effluent water from private treatment plants into the adjacent watercourse network. She added the Planning Engineer had suggested that the Commissioners respond in much the same way as March Sixth DDC when dealing with a similar application being,

".. should go into the existing adopted sewerage system for the reasons you have given and in spite of the distance from the site" and "that any discharge of treated foul effluent into the Boards Drain should only ever be considered if there is no other viable option which is clearly not the case in this instance."

Miss Ablett referred to the erection of 6 dwellings at land north of March Braza Club (MLC Ref. No 480) and enquired whether the Commissioners wished for the Planning Engineer to request documents included in the deed of Sale, confirming the long-term ownership funding, management and maintenance arrangements, that meet the Commissioners satisfaction for the upkeep of any water level and flood risk management system.

Members agreed the Planning Engineer should request all necessary documents for this site, together with that of the Berryfields development.

The Chairman reported that a couple of residents at Foxglove Way had contacted the Commissioners enquiring whether the Commissioners would consider allowing them to fund the piping of a small section of drain at point 7. The Consulting Engineer advised that he, together with the Chairman did not consider the request would be a problem for the Commissioners as long as the correct consent application was received, the work was undertaken to the Commissioners' specifications and satisfaction and was at no cost to the Commissioners. The Consulting Engineer added that the Commissioners did not usually promote culverting of watercourses, but piping this section could be of benefit.

The Chairman agreed that the culvert would make it easier to carry out maintenance works.

The Consulting Engineer referred to the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer's request for pump attendants and District Officers to provide meter readings and details of pumped hours to him on a monthly basis.

The Chairman requested the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer be asked to contact him so a system could be organised that would work for both parties.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

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

ii) Weed control and drain maintenance
That the maintenance works contained within the report be undertaken

ii) That the decision making on projects be delegated to both the Chairman and Vice Chairman

iii) MLC Ref No 503 – That the Planning Engineer writes to Anglia Water re the road and encroachment on the District Drain at Point 22

iv) MLC Ref Nos. 223,534 & 539 –That the Planning Engineer responds to applicant as March 6th DDC when dealing with a similar application advising the applicant that a connection to the adopted sewer system would be requested in much the same way.

v) MLC Ref Nos. 480 and 488,505,521,524 & 533 and for the Berryfields development– That the Planning Engineer requests documents included in the deed of Sale, confirming the long-term ownership funding, management and maintenance arrangements, that meet the Commissioners satisfaction for the upkeep of any water level and flood risk management system

vi) That the residents be advised the Commissioners have approved for them to pipe the drain at Point 7, subject to the correct consent application being received, the work being carried out to the Commissioners' specifications and satisfaction and at no cost to the Commissioners

viii) That the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer contacts the District Officer to discuss the taking and recording of meter readings/pumping hours

ix) That all Members be emailed details of any development, which consists of more than three properties or where any development is problematic.

<u>C.1241 Capital Improvement Programme</u>

The Commissioners considered their future capital improvement programme, viz;

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)

		PREVIOUS YEAR	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
North Creek P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0	30.0	36.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	80.0	80.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
South Creek P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	60.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.0	75.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0		0.0	12.0
	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
	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drainage Channels														
		9.2	**0.0**	**36**	**36**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**12**	**0**	**205**	**298**

The Clerk referred to the supplementary report that Nicola Oldfield, the Chief Engineer, had prepared and advised she had tried to summarise early observations she had made to get some improved processes in place.

He advised that it would be necessary to complete a project initiation form for the works at North Creek Pumping Station so all parties were clear on what it was the Commissioners were asking the Middle Level Commissioners to undertake and of the associated tolerances that had to be managed with that project.

The Clerk advised that for those projects already identified, in this case North Creek Pumping Station, the Commissioners were being asked to delegate decision making to one or two Members, as projects can't be effectively managed and delivered if there was only one board meeting a year.

The Chairman suggested the Commissioners should delegate two members to be points of contact for the North Creek Pumping Station scheme so as to have a range of knowledge. Members proposed the Chairman who was also the district officer, together with the Vice Chairman be nominated as they both have an engineering background.

The Clerk reported there were a range of capital works planned for both the Middle Level Commissioners and Internal Drainage Boards, which were probably beyond the capacity of the technical services team to deliver, so both he and the Chief Engineer were looking at alternative resource solutions to support the wider engineering department. He advised the Middle Level Commissioners wanted to explore how to exploit the economies of scale that came with several Internal Drainage Boards having lots of similar works across the area. He added that in view of challenges within the market it was necessary to investigate how the work on behalf of a number of boards could be packaged as it may be beneficial to package together several projects so the work was more attractive to suppliers.

The Clerk referred to the use of public sector delivery frameworks, for example the EA delivery framework or SCAPE, a public sector procurement specialist. He advised this would open up access to the fees, terms and conditions of these frameworks so the consulting engineers could compare and choose the most suitable procurement route for delivery of the Commissioners future needs.

The Clerk enquired whether the Commissioners would be happy to authorise him, on their behalf, to enter into user and/or access agreements for Public Sector Delivery frameworks. He advised that having this resolution from all Boards/Commissioners administered by the Middle Level Commissioners was key to being able to package work across Boards to exploit economies of scale and become more efficient and effective in the delivery of service.

RESOLVED

> That the Capital Programme be approved in principle and kept under review.
>
> That both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman be nominated as the points of contact for the duration of the North Creek Pumping Station scheme.
>
> That the Clerk be authorised to enter into user and/or access agreements for Public Sector Delivery frameworks.

C.1242 District Officer's Report

The District Officer advised there was not much more to add to that already reported by the Consulting Engineer.

He reported there was a potential problem that may arise on Flassgrass Hill Road, regarding water backing up in the drain opposite Wood Paddock, which was now a Bed & Breakfast. He added the residents were having a lot of issues with their septic tank/treatment plant, which was probably originally installed for a 3-bedroom residential dwelling and as the property was now being used as a Bed & Breakfast the tank was probably no longer suitable, in an area that was already not suitable for soakaways.

The District Officer advised the Commissioners had to investigate whether there was a blockage as everything beyond Wood Paddock was clear.

Councillor French enquired how the raw sewage was being disposed of as that would be an environmental health issue. The Consulting Engineer confirmed he had not seen any, but had been informed by local people that they were finding raw sewage in the ditch and advised the drains were the responsibility of the adjacent landowners. Councillor French considered the County Council Enforcement Officer should investigate the matter further.

The Consulting Engineer agreed this would be a good idea especially as this was partly the Council's responsibility and would not be a cost to the Commissioners.

RESOLVED

> That the Chairman and Consulting Engineer visit the site to investigate further
>
> That Councillor French contacts the Cambridgeshire County Council to request a site visit by their Enforcement Officer

C.1243 Environment Officer's Report

Miss Ablett referred to the Environment Officer's Report, viz;

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COMMISSIONERS

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CAMBRIDGESHIRE
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Sofi Lloyd
Environment Officer

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Environmental Update – March 2023

Introduction

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

I have been familiarising myself with the IDB area, its approaches and plans as well as I can, over winter, but from Spring onwards I would like to plan some further visits to the IDB area to develop a much better understanding of the area and your priorities, so will be in touch to do so.

1. Bank Raising Project

You will have been made aware of the Bank Raising Project and the work that is planned on the MLC channels and banks within the District, including the cutter suction dredging and settlement lagoons. The ecological considerations of the project are being dealt with separately, outside of this report, along with the project update. However, should you have any questions about the projects' ecological considerations then do contact me directly and I will be happy to help.

2. Biodiversity Action Plan Review

The Biodiversity Action Plan has traditionally been the key document which sets out the IDBs' planned contributions towards conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Although the BAP remains vital, the objectives are unlikely to be reached unless there is a process in place to ensure that the incremental steps that need to be taken to achieve the BAP objectives are incorporated into routine operations and are reviewed regularly. Otherwise, the BAP simply becomes a document that is reviewed once or twice a year. It is the review of these processes that I will be focussing on, rather than reviewing the objectives in the BAP, as the objectives themselves still remain valid.

3. Process and Compliance Review

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

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

4. GIS System Development

To support the activities mentioned above, an improved environmental GIS system is being developed and work is well underway to digitise all available environmental data. Lots of data exists due to all the good work already undertaken by IDBs but it exists in different states in different places. There is also a great deal of information held by the Local Environmental Records Centres, for which we have just signed a contract to receive. This will be vital data source that we must consult when planning our work to help us identify any protected and priority species which may be impacted or enhanced by our work. We need to merge all these data sets to develop a more complete picture of what we have, in order to define and preserve the baseline from which to progress. This, more complete picture is also necessary to enable us to identify opportunities for environmental enhancement. Developing the GIS system this way will deliver efficiencies in environmental data collection, analysis and reporting, allowing more time to undertake practical conservation work on the ground. It will also enable us to share our data more easily with the local environmental records centres, contributing to the understanding of the local and national status of many species and help to raise the profile of the IDB and the valuable work they do to support biodiversity. You can see an example of how some of the digitised data is coming together in the attached IDB map.

5. Work Package Ecological Screening Document

We have developed the above template document (also in appendix) for IDBs to complete when planning any ad hoc/non routine works that will "break ground" on the any of the banks. The information is needed in order to evidence that we have correctly considered the ecological impacts of the work, and to identify opportunities for enhancement, as we are mandated to do by law. Such activities for which the form would be relevant include anything other than vegetation cutting i.e., bank reformation, mooring construction, culverting, head walls, piling, filling in a ditch, moving an access culvert etc.

Only the first page needs completing by the IDB (not a lot of info needed) and the rest by me. I undertake the assessment as far as possible, and then return the second part of the document to the IDB, setting out what surveys etc. will be needed, if any. I may be able to undertake some of the practical surveys but in some cases, an ecological consultant with a specialist licence may be needed. In some cases, there may not be a need for any surveys and the recommendations will be that the work can proceed with some adaptions to the proposed approach such as altered timings or establishment of "no-work" buffers around sensitive areas.

When all desk and fieldwork is complete, the form is "signed off" from an ecological perspective, and returned to the IDB with recommendations for the approaches to be taken. This means the IDB and the operatives undertaking the work have full sight of the ecological constraints, mitigations and approaches required to remain compliant. It is recommended that this form is completed and sent as early as possible to prevent delays, even up to 1 year. The form is available by emailing sofi.lloyd@middlelevel.gov.uk and will shortly also be made available from the website.

6. Protected Species

a) Water Vole

As always, any work that plans to "break ground" on the any of the banks, so bank reformation, mooring construction, culverting, head walls, piling etc, **OR the removal of any marginal vegetation, please let me know ASAP by completing the above ecological screening document** so we can plan the appropriate surveys and mitigations in plenty of time, to avoid any delays and ensure compliance with wildlife legislation. This is particularly relevant for water voles. We know that there are some known valuable water-vole ditches in the district and some which could be enhanced to better support the local population but the accepted approach is to always assume water voles are present in all ditches, and plan work around their assumed presence, in order to avoid committing an offence in terms of wildlife legislation. There is a lot of good, pragmatic and practical guidance on how to properly consider water voles during IDB works contained in the Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDBs.

b) Badgers

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

c) Birds

Please be reminded of the legislation around the disturbance of breeding birds, particularly when cutting vegetation or bank-side trees, between March and September and where kingfishers are known to hunt such as around Binnmoor Fen. Please see the relevant chapter in the Environmental Good Governance Guide (available on the ADA website) to refresh your understanding of mitigation and survey requirements and get in touch should you have any questions.

i. Barn owls

I have met with our barn owl conservation delivery partners and we had defined a schedule of checking and refreshing barn owl boxes over winter but have unfortunately been unable to commence due to the restrictions imposed by BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) due to avian flu. We continue to monitor the guidance and act accordingly and have been able to commence some box checking by following strict biosecurity measures. Please do let us know therefore if there are any boxes that you feel need some maintenance ASAP so we can plan to visit them before the start of the breeding season. It is even more important during these times that you please help us with the following:

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

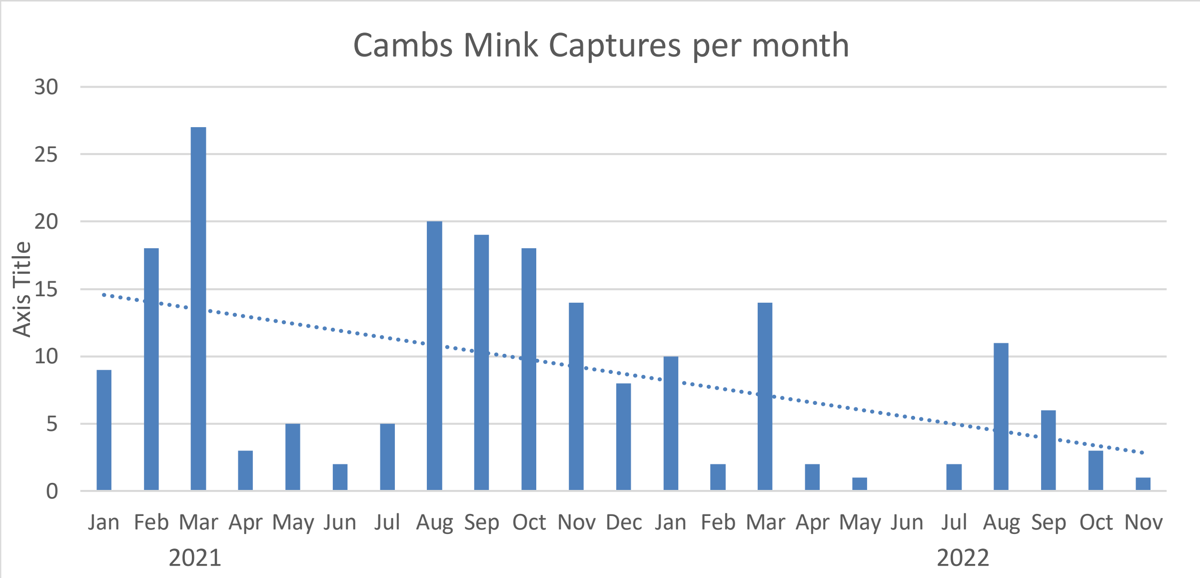
ii. Avian Flu

Please ensure that you are familiar with, **and promote the knowledge of** the DEFRA guidelines on avian flu, in particular those for reporting suspected cases: Bird flu (avian influenza): latest situation in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). If any dead birds are spotted, please do let us know and we can come and collect and dispose of them in a safe manner to minimise the risk of the disease spreading to other wildlife.

d) Mink & Water Voles

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

The following chart shows the number of mink caught each month, suggesting a declining population. However there have been a number of mink caught in recent weeks in the MLC area, probably due to the breeding season being underway and their increased travel to find a mate, so trapping is still very valuable and reporting any sightings is key to ensure that traps are ideally placed.



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

Middle Level mink 2022_List

List of mink captures around the Middle Level in 2022

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

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

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

7. Invasive species

Please advise on the status of the Parrots Feather that was managed in the drains off Foxglove Way in March and April 2022. If this needs further inspection and control please let me know ASAP. Please be alert to spot it early so it can be managed more effectively this year if necessary.

Please also advise on the last date of the inspection of previous Japanese Knotweed site near drain node 3.

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

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

a) Floating Pennywort

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

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

b) Azolla

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

c) Chinese Mitten Crabs

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

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

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

d) Turkish Crayfish

We have received reliable reports of the presence of Turkish crayfish in some MLC drains. Turkish Crayfish are a schedule 9 listed species listed in the Wildlife & Countryside Act meaning that it is an offence to release them or allow them to escape into the wild. Their impact is not widely understood but it is said that that they are known to reside alongside Signal Crayfish, rather than displace them or be displaced by them. Where populations of our native and protected white-clawed crayfish are still present, they are likely to outcompete them but they do not carry crayfish plague which does impact native crayfish. There is no evidence that Turkish crayfish burrow so it is unlikely that they would cause extensive damage to riverbanks but they could reduce fishery profits by competing with fish for food, stealing baits or causing declines in fish recruitment through loss of macrophyte habitat, according to the non-native species secretariat. Please be vigilant and report sightings of the species and maintain strong biosecurity procedures. They can be distinguished from other crayfish species by their long narrow claws, as shown in the pictures below.

Turkish Crayfish
Claws: claws normally same colour as body but underside lightly coloured. Fingers long, straight and narrow

White-clawed crayfish
Claws: are noticeably granular and are whitish to light pink on the underside, never red.

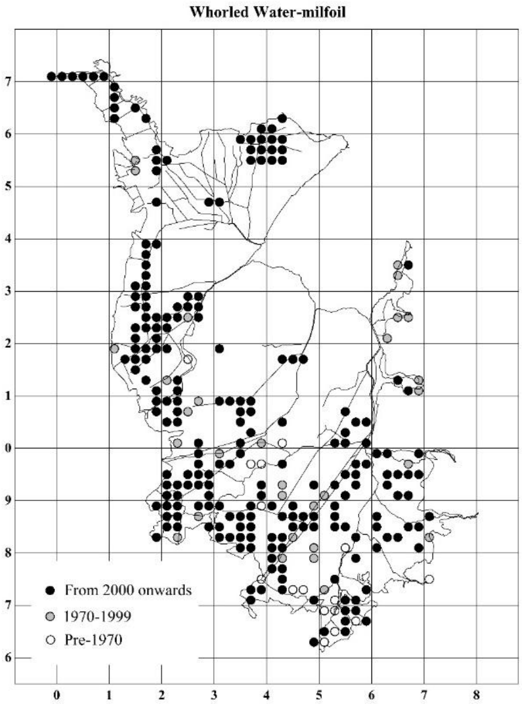
American Signal Crayfish
Claws white or turquoise patch at junction between fixed and moveable finger. Underside of claws are red.

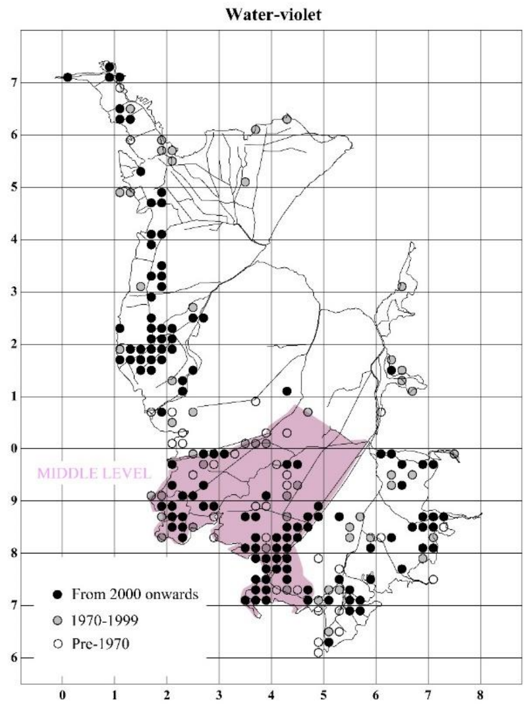
If it is necessary to dispatch a Turkish crayfish, American signal crayfish, or any other non-native crayfish, because it has been removed from the channel accidentally, please ensure that you are familiar with its distinguishing features and can confidently tell it apart from particularly white clawed crayfish. This will ensure no offence against a protected species occurs. There are very few records of the native white-clawed crayfish remaining in the MLC area but care should still be taken and no assumption made. More information can be found at: https://www.nonnativespecies.org/non-native-species/information-portal/view/381

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

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

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





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

9. Eels

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

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

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

10. Environmental Stewardship.

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

11. Carbon & Climate

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

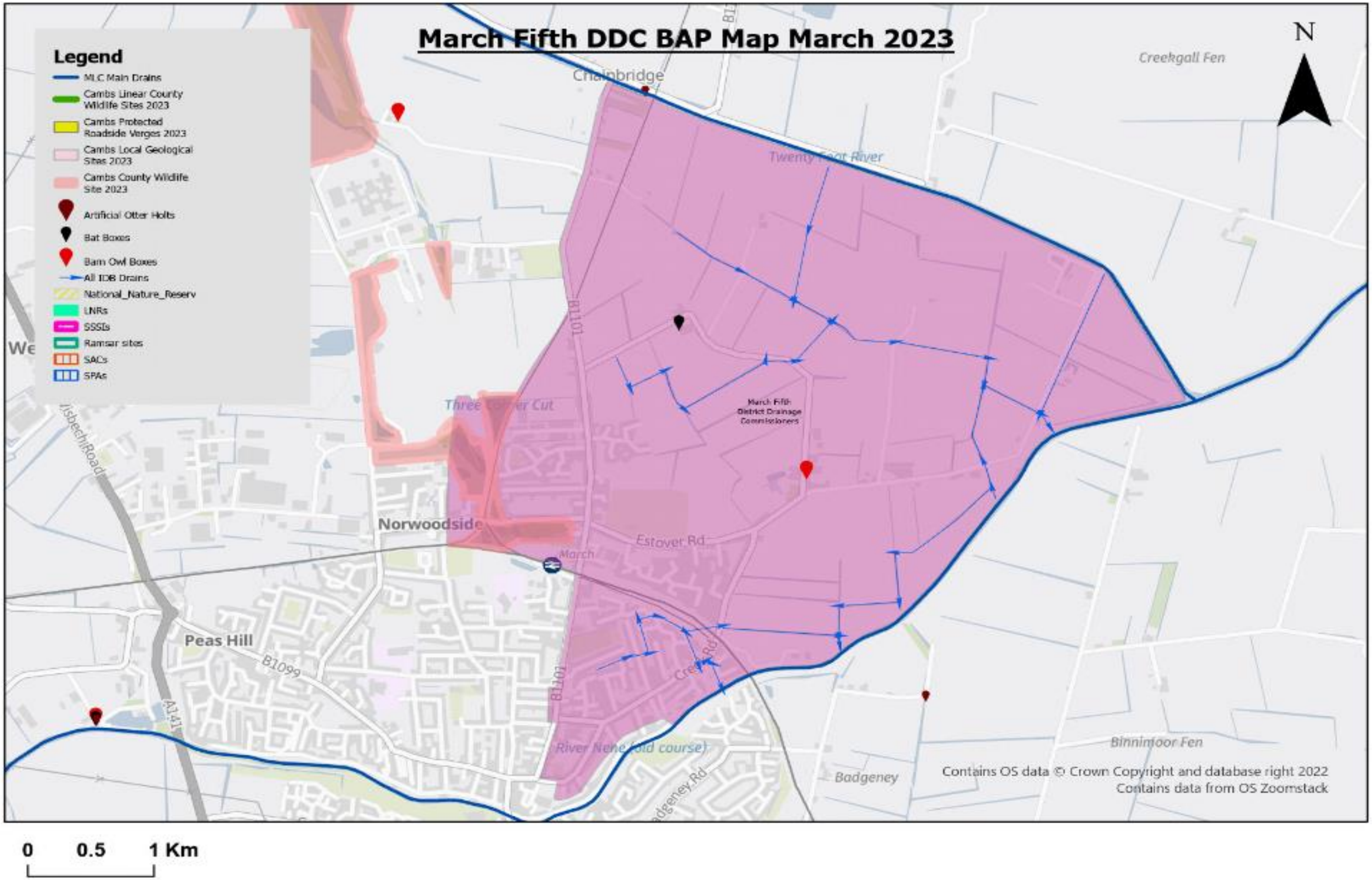
Last year ADA published a Carbon Accounting Guide for IDBs, which is available from their website. The process of calculating carbon emissions does not have to be as complicated as some may think. If you have reviewed the guide and would like some help to progress with calculating your carbon emissions,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

12. Paludiculture

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

13. Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDBs

I have a copy of the above guide, published by ADA last September, for each Chairman and District Officer which I can hand to you when I visit if you don't have a copy already. Until then, an on-line version is available from **here** and you can also request copies from ADA directly admin@ada.org.uk.



March Fifth DDC BAP Map March 2023
N
Legend
MLC Main Drains
Cambs Linear County Wildlife Sites 2023
Cambs Protected Roadside Verges 2023
Cambs Local Geological Sites 2023
Cambs County Wildlife Site 2023
Artificial Otter Holts
Bat Boxes
Barn Owl Boxes
All IDB Drains
National_Nature_Reserv
LNRs
SSSIs
Ramsar sites
SACs
SPAs
Chainbridge
Creekgall Fen
Twenty Foot River
B1101
Three Holes Cut
March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners
Norwoodside
Estover Rd
March
Peas Hill
B1099
A141
Creek Rd
River Nene (old course)
Badgeney
Binnimoor Fen
Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2022
Contains data from OS Zoomstack
0 0.5 1 Km

IDB Work Package
Environmental Screening

middle level commissioners

Operatives & field workers - please refer to orange sections

Ops/Eng Officer complete Part 1 - Env Officer complete Parts 2-6

PART 1: Workpackage details.	
IDB Name:	
Responsible Engineer/Officer:	
Name of work package:	
Work/project reference:	
Work package description:	
Planned start date:	
Planned completion date:	
Duration:	
Rationale for timing:	
Location: (Use W3W start and end point and direction of travel)	
Brief description of justification (benefits):	
Alternative options considered:	
Main materials to be used:	
Carbon considerations: (confirm fuel type and mileage will be recorded)	
Main machinery to be used: (include weight, width, height and noise rating):	
Vegetation management requirements: (hedges, scrub, trees, grass)**:**	

Channel works (widening, bank reforming or reprofiling, concrete headwall installation)**:**	
Changes to water levels and flow:	
Access route to site: (include map):	
Frequency & times of access:	
Type & number of vehicles expected on site:	
Materials storage arrangements & location (include map)**:**	
Disposal of materials: (i.e. removed to landfill by contractor, burned on site, left on bank)	
Environmental & waste permits needed (& who will arrange if new needed)**:**	
Planning or IDB consent required?	
Other relevant information:	i.e. risk assessments / utilities searches, H&S method stmts in place? Public safety arrangements.

Completed by:			
Name:	**Signature:**	**Date:**	

PART 2: Environmental Screening & Appraisal Summary & Sign-off			
Summary:			
Sign off:			
Name:	**Signature:**	**Date:**	

PART 3: Statutory and Non-statutory Sites Assessment	
1. SSSI Assessment	
Is the activity in, or near to a SSSI? (Name if yes)	
SSSI Assent required?	
Potential for effect:	
SSSI recommendations/mitigations:	
SSSI Assent confirmation date:	
2. SPA/SAC/Ramsar Assessment	
Is the activity in a SPA/SAC/RAMSAR site or on land considered functionally linked to the site? (Name if yes)	
HRA required?:	
Overview of HRA screening & recommendations/mitigations:	
Date of HRA screening approval:	
Overview of Appropriate Assessment & recommendations/mitigations:	
Date of Appropriate Assessment approval:	
3. Local and National Nature Reserves Assessment	
Is the activity in or near to a LNR or NNR? (name if yes)	
Potential for effect:	
LNR/NNR recommendations/mitigations:	
4. Statutory Historic Sites (Scheduled monuments, world heritage sites, listed buildings)	
Is the activity in or near to a historic site? (name if yes)	
Potential for effect:	

Historic site recommendations/mitigations:	
5. Non-Statutory Sites (County wildlife sites, local wildlife sites, pocket parks)	
Is the activity in or near to a non-stat site? (name if yes)	
Potential for effect:	
Non-stat' site approved recommendations/mitigations:	
6. Other Sites & Features (TPO trees, biodiversity net gain provisions, environmental stewardship provisions, protected hedgerows)	
Is the activity in or near to another valued feature? (name if yes)	
Potential for effect:	
Site/Feature approved recommendations/mitigations:	

PART 4: Environmental Assessments	
6. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Land Drainage) Regulations	
Is the work package improvement works, as defined in the EIA regs? (if no, justify)	
EIA screening & scoping overview & determination date:	
EIA recommendations/mitigations:	
EIA Environmental Statement overview & determination date:	

EIA recommendations/mitigations:	
4. Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment	
RBMP catchment details:	
Potential to significantly impact WFD objectives:	
Overview of WFD assessment:	
WFD recommendations/mitigations:	

PART 5: Protected & Priority Species Appraisal	
5. Eel Regulations Assessment	
Will a barrier to eels be created or an existing barrier modified?	
Is there a risk of injury or mortality to eels?	
BAEP assessment date:	
BAEP approval date:	
Eel recommendations/mitigation (including licences & approvals)**:**	
2. Water Vole	
Will the work impact the inner bank face or bank toe including marginal vegetation?	
Survey requirements:	
Water vole recommendations/mitigation (including licences & approvals)**:**	

3. Birds	
Will timing of work affect nesting species?	
Survey requirements:	
Breeding bird recommendations / mitigation (including licences & approvals)**:**	
5. Fish	
Potential effect on fish, fish passage or habitat quality?	
Survey requirements:	
Fish recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
6. Trees and hedges	
Does the activity require management or removal of mature trees or hedgerows?	
Survey requirements:	
Tree/hedge recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
7. Otter	
Potential effect on otters:	
Survey requirements:	
Otter recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	

7. Badger	
Potential for badger disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Badger recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
8. Bats	
Potential for bat disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Bat recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
9. Great Crested Newt	
Potential for GCN disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
GCN recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
10. Invertebrates (including pollinators, butterflies, moths, dragon & damsel flies etc.)	
Potential for invertebrate disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Invertebrate recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
10. Reptiles	

Potential for reptile disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Reptile recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
10. Plants	
Potential for rare & protected plant disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Botanical recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
11. Other Protected/Priority Species	
Potential for disturbance:	
Survey requirements:	
Other recommendations/mitigations (including licences & approvals)**:**	
12. Invasive Non-native Species	
Activity close to known location of high-risk invasive species?	
Survey requirements:	
Actions required to avoid the spread of invasive species:	

PART 6: Opportunities for Enhancement	
Opportunities for enhancement:	

PART 7: Appendix

i) Miss Ablett advised the Environment Officer had requested the Commissioners to advise on the status of the Parrots Feather that was managed in the drains off Foxglove Way in March and April 2022 and whether it needed further inspection and control.

ii) Miss Ablett advised the Environment Officer had also enquired of the last date of the inspection of previous Japanese Knotweed site near point 3.

RESOLVED

Members considered and approved the most recent Report

i) and ii) That the Consulting Engineer liaises with the Environment Officer

C.1244 District Officer's Fee

The Commissioners gave consideration to the District Officer's fee for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED

That the Commissioners agree that the sum of £932 be allowed for the services of the District Officer for 2023/2024.

(NB) – Mr T Hopkin declared a financial interest when this item was discussed.

C.1245 State-aided Schemes

Consideration was given to the desirability of undertaking further State-aided Schemes in the District and whether any future proposals should be included in the capital forecasts provided to the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED

That no proposals be formulated at the present time, other than those already resolved.

C.1246 Environment Agency – Precepts

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

C.1247 Claims for Highland Water Contributions – Section 57 Land Drainage Act 1991

The Clerk reported that following his submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £1,387.88 (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency (£1,559.62 representing 80% of the Commissioners' estimated expenditure for the financial year 2022/23 less £171.74 overpaid in respect of the financial year 2021/22)

C.1248 Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscriptions

Miss Ablett reported that ADA has increased subscriptions by 4.5% for 2023, from £571 to £597.

RESOLVED

That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2023 be paid.

C.1249 Rate arrears

Consideration was given to writing off rate arrears amounting to £18.90.

RESOLVED

That the arrears be written off.

C.1250 Health and Safety

Further to minute C.1214, the Chairman referred to the report received from Cope Safety Management following their visit to the District on the 5th January 2023, viz;

Site Safety Inspection Record

March Fifth IDB SSI 050123 — Complete

Name of organisation:	March 5th IDB
Date of site visit	05.01.2023 09:00 GMT
Address of inspected premises	Flagrass Hill Farm, March, PE15 0BX North Creek Pumping Station South Creek Pumping Station
Name of Advisor	Simon Cross
Time of arrival at site:	05.01.2023 08:35 GMT
Audit Name	March Fifth IDB SSI 050123

Audit	
An opening meeting was held with	
Tony Hopkin	
Have there been any accidents since our last visit?	No
Have there been any new starters since our last visit?	No

1

Introduction. An opening meeting was held with Tony prior to a site visit to both pumping stations within the Board's responsibility. It was reported that there have been no significant changes since the previous visit. It was confirmed that copies of the relevant risk assessments and safe systems of work provided to Middle Level Commissioners have been communicated to the Board.

2

North Creek Pumping Station. It was understood that there hadn't been any changes to the status of the adjoining property with regards planning permission for change of use. Manual clearing of weeds from the weed screen is reportedly undertaken very infrequently due to the location and use.

3

South Creek Pumping Station.
* Powerline pole. The nearby overhead power line pole that was reportedly leaning significantly at the last visit is still in the same condition. Although not the direct responsibility of the IDB, where practical, the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) should be contacted to report the potential issue. In the interim the condition should be monitored.

* Weed screen edge protection. Following replacement of the upper barrier rail above the weed screen as a result of a previous recommendation, there is still a potential gap where the operator could slip and fall into the water whilst manually clearing weeds. See separate photographic risk assessment in this report for more detail. It is recommended that the position of the rail is adjusted to bring it closer to the platform, whilst still allowing suitable access for clearing the screen. In addition, the provision of a suitable toe board across the top of the weed screen to reduce the slip risk and provide extra foot support whilst clearing the screen.

Photographic Risk Assessment

Photographic Risk Assessment

Photographic Risk Assessment 1

Location/Task/Activity

South Creek Pumping Station. Improvements to weed screen edge protection and slip risk reduction.

Nature of hazard

Due to the position of the top barrier rail, there remains a significant gap that the operator could fall between into the water. This is exacerbated as the top of the weed screen is flush and level with the platform deck resulting in no protection for the operator slipping on the wet surface.

Recommended remedial action

* Adjust the position of the top barrier rail so closer to the platform deck in optimum position to still allow access for weed clearing using crome/rake.without having to reach over.
* Provide appropriate toe board across the top of the weed screen frame to enable protection against slipping and provide additional foot support for manual screen clearing.

Applicable legislation	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Work at Height Regulations 2005 Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
Level of Risk	Medium

05.01.2023 09:13 GMT

Photo 1

Signature of person informed

Signature of person informed 1

Signature of person informed

Tony Hopkin

05.01.2023 09:26 GMT

Advisor's signature

Simon Cross
05.01.2023 10:40 GMT

Departure time 05.01.2023 09:30 GMT

Photographic Risk Assessments closed out during the visit.

No PRAs

Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments **0**
From 0 to 99

Appendix

Photo 1

MARCH FIFTH IDB
SUMMARY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC RISK ASSESSMENTS

Site Safety Inspection 5 January 2023

Ref.	Location	Risk Level	Brief Description	Action
1	South Creek Pumping Station.	M	Improvements to weed screen edge protection and slip risk reduction. Hazard is due to the position of the top barrier rail, there remains a significant gap that the operator could fall between into the water. This is exacerbated as the top of the weed screen is flush and level with the platform deck resulting in no protection for the operator slipping on the wet surface. * Adjust the position of the top barrier rail so closer to the platform deck in optimum position to still allow access for weed clearing using crome/rake.without having to reach over. * Provide appropriate toe board across the top of the weed screen frame to enable protection against slipping and provide additional foot support for manual screen clearing.	

The Chairman reported there were no problems or matters to report regarding North Creek pumping station.

He further reported that following the health & safety visit by COPE Safety Management he had moved the top barrier rail closer to the platform deck and provided toe board across the top of the weedscreen frame, which would prevent him from slipping whilst manually cleaning the weedscreen.

The Chairman referred to the nearby overhead powerline pole, which was leaning significantly. The Consulting Engineer confirmed he had logged the matter with UK Power Networks so it was out of the Commissioners' hands.

C.1251 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Commissioners – 2021/2022

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

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Notice of conclusion of the audit

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

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

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

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

The Clerk
March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

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

Date of Announcement: 26th September 2022

Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

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

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

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

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: 19/04/2022 20/04/2022 18/05/2022

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

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: B. REECH – WHITINGS LLP

Date: 18/05/2022

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

We acknowledge as the members of:

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

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

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

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

12/04/22

and recorded as minute reference:

C.1222

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

Chairman

Clerk

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2022 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	108,555	92,336	*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	16,903	25,624	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,485	7,582	*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	0	0	*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	34,607	32,177	*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	92,336	93,365	*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	115,020	104,970	*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	809,000	809,000	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

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

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

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 5th APRIL 2022

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

12/04/22

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE C.1224

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

TD [signature] SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of **MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS – DB0049**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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

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

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

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

2 External auditor report 2021/22

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

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

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2021/22

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

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

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

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

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

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

BB/MM053
11 October 2022

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

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

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2021-2022

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

<u>General points</u>

1. **Asset Valuations and Insurances**

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Provisions

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

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

Client comment:

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

4. Budget figures

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

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

Client comment:

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

5. Surplus Funds

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

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

6. Rental of Land

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

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

Client comment:

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

Specific Points

Conington & Holme IDB

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

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

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

Client comment:

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

Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Joint Pumping Arrangement

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

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

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

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

Client comment:

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

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

March East IDB

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

Client comment:

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

March Sixth DDC

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

Client comment:

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP

C.1252 Appointment of Internal Auditor

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

middle level
commissioners

Internal Audit Tender Proposal to

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

November 2022

Whitings
Chartered Accountants LLP

Index

Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your Requirements

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

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

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

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

Our Audit Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A -Return, Accounts & Completion (Annually)

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

B - Purchases (Cyclically)

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

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

Minutes

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

Value for Money

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

Risk Management

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

Ethical Standards and Sustainability

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

D - Budget and Variance Analysis (Cyclically)

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

E - Sales (Cyclically)

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

F - Petty Cash (Cyclically)

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

G - Wages (Cyclically)

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

H - Assets (Cyclically)

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

I - Bank (Annually)

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

J - Trial Balance & Nominal (Cyclically)

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

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

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

Consultancy and Advice

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

Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption

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

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

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

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

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

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

About Whitings LLP

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

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

Service Offerings

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

Sector Specialisms

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

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

Our Fees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Personnel and Career Summaries

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

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

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

The proposed core audit team will be:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B - List of Administered Boards

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

RESOLVED

The Board approved the appointment of Whitings LLP as Internal Auditor.

C.1253 Defra IDB1 Returns

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

Internal Drainage Boards in England

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2022

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

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

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

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

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Section A – Financial information

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

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

Special levies information for financial year 2022-23 (forecast)	
Name of local authority	**2022-23 forecast £**
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	25,829
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**25,829**

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Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2022

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

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2022 £
INCOME		
1. Drainage Rates		2,809
2. Special Levies		22,815
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		1,626
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		4,320
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		0
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		0
7. Loans		0
8. Rechargeable Works		0
9. Interest and Investment Income		6
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		200
11. Other Income		1,430
Total income		**33,206**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		0
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		2,118
14. Watercourse maintenance		15,754
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		3,490
16. Administration		9,866
17. PSCAs		0
18. Rechargeable Works		0
19. Finance Charges		0
20. SSSIs		0
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		468
22. Other Expenditure		481
Total expenditure		**32,177**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		0
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**1,029**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		67,181
25. Grant income not applied in year		0

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

17. State all costs associated with the PSCA

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

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

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

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

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

23. For the disposal of assets, state the difference between any proceeds from the sale/disposal of the asset and the cost of the asset less accumulated depreciation.
24. Total balance of developer fund year end.

25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

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

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

Biodiversity

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

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

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

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

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?.. 12/04/2022

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?

8

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

2

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

1.44 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?	10
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	9
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	8
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	2
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	6
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?

2.5%

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

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

Signature	S Ablett
Date	17/04/2022
Name in BLOCK LETTERS	MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT
Designation	ASSISTANT TREASURER
Email address	sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

C.1254 Budgeting

Miss Ablett referred to the budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2022, viz;

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET MONITORING 2022/2023

		Budget 2022/2023 £	Actual to 31/12/2022 £	Forecast to 31/03/2023 £	Remarks
1	Insurances	650	617	625	
2	Repairs and renewals	3,700	2,889	3,700	
3	Fuel (electricity)	2,000	316	2,500	- Accounts received to September
4	Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	11,500	5,145	10,500	
5	District Officers' fees	900	0	900	
6	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising.	9,500	3,650	9,500	
7	Environment Agency - Precept	2,160	2,160	2,160	
8	Improvement works	39,000	9,000	9,000	Budget proposal included for replacement North Creek pump. Meeting approved to develop grant aid business case before proceeding.
		69,410	23,777	38,885	
	LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Highland Water Contributions etc	40,390	10,549	10,549	
		29,020	13,228.10	28,336	

C.1255 Review of Internal Controls

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

C.1256 Risk Management Assessment

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

b) The Commissioners considered and approved the sums insured to be index-linked from April 2023, viz;

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
INSURED VALUES OF FIXED ASSETS

	As At 1st April 2023
North Creek Pumping Station	411,555.00
South Creek Pumping Station	417,230.00
	828,785.00

C.1257 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Miss Ablett reported that, as resolved at its last meeting, the Board will continue with a limited assurance review and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

RESOLVED

To continue with a limited assurance review should the income or expenditure fall below £25,000 in future years.

C.1258 Exercise of Public Rights

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

C.1259 Annual Governance Statement – 2022/2023

The Commissioners considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended on the 31st March 2023, viz;

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

	Agreed Yes	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:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chairman SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk SIGNATURE REQUIRED

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

RESOLVED

> That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement, on behalf of the Commissioners, for the financial year ending 31st March 2023.

C.1260 Payments 2022/2023

The Commissioners considered and approved payments amounting to £27,727.94, which had been made during the financial year 2022/2023, viz;

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Conservation Officer)	467.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	305.96
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	869.10
Middle Level Commissioners - Drain maintenance at Foxglove Way	1,157.75
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Health and Safety contract	5,090.78
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2021/22, production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,525.20
Middle Level Commissioners - Drain maintenance at Foxglove Way	(1,175.31)
Environment Agency - Precept	1,080.04
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	317.96
Tim Fisher Landscape Services - Grass cutting at pumping stations	90.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
Mr C Gillies & Ms B Adamson - Refund of discharge contribution	267.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	200.00
Association of Drainage Authorities - Annual Subscription 2022	685.20
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	317.96
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	617.47
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit Fee (2021-2022 accounts)	240.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	639.61
Environment Agency - Precept	1,080.03
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2021/2022 accounts)	558.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges and stationery	3,901.66
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Conservation Officer)	467.50
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	317.96
Middle Level Commissioners - Replace pump access gate post at South Creek pumping station	543.79
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of delay timer at South Creek pumping station (Account from Foxtam)	182.08
Middle Level Commissioners - Strip polish & rebuild syphon breaker at North Creek pumping station	146.34
Harrison Agricultural - Flail mowing	2,649.60
Harrison Agricultural - Drain maintenance	1,215.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Discussions in respect of works at pumping stations and the potential for GIA, planning and development applications)	240.00
Association of Drainage Authorities (River Great Ouse branch) - Subscription 2022-2023	6.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Chemical weed control of District drains.	868.50
Information Commissioners - Data Protection Registration renewal	40.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	317.96
Middle Level Commissioners - Preparation of highland water claims	106.87
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Work in connection with potential damage to rising main near Creek Road, planning and development applications)	154.80
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
Mrs J Henson - Refund of discharge contribution	340.00
Mr & Mrs K Ogden - Refund of dicharge contribution	340.00
Anglia Farmers - Electricity supply (North Creek pumping station)	554.18
Anglia Farmers - Electricity supply (South Creek pumping station)	234.46
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (North Creek pumping station)	133.49
Anglia Farmers - Electricity metering charges - (South Creek pumping station)	133.50
	27,727.94

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

(NB) – The District Officer declared an interest in the payment made to him

C.1261 Annual Accounts of the Commissioners – 2022/2023

The Commissioners considered and approved the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2023 as required in the Audit Regulations, viz;

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023
GENERAL FUND

2023				2022			
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year			Apr-01	Balance brought forward		26,183.96
	Precept		2,160.07	2023			
	Insurances	617.47		Mar-31	Rate income & Special levy	29,165.66	
	Repairs & Renewals	2,928.72			Interest on Deposit Accounts	0.79	
	Fuel	1,355.84			Rent	200.00	
	Drainworks	7,203.26			Consent	50.00	
	Administration charge, Audit fee,				Highland Water contributions	1,298.82	
	printing, stationery, advertising etc	9,134.60	21,239.89		Development a/c - telemetry	4,625.83	35,341.10
	Installation of telemetry		9,251.66				
	Balance carried forward		33,499.27		Grant-in-aid - telemetry		4,625.83
			66,150.89				66,150.89

BALANCE SHEET

Capital Section

Liabilities		Assets		
Capital Provisions Account	809,000.00	Land - Slamp	9,000.00	
		North Creek Pumping Station	400,000.00	
		South Creek Pumping Station	400,000.00	
	809,000.00			809,000.00

Revenue Section

General Fund	33,499.27	Ratepayers Account - Arrears	159.82
Development Charges Account	62,290.35	Rent Account - Arrears	0.00
Sundry Creditors	21,456.10	Defra Grant-in-Aid	1,942.92
		Sundry Debtors	0.00
		Value added Tax - Refunds due	3,052.98
		Balance in hand - Treasurer's Accounts	112,090.00
	926,245.72		926,245.72

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022
DEVELOPMENT CHARGES ACCOUNT

2022				2021			
Mar-31	Middle Level Commissioners-Fees	271.49		Apr-01	Balance brought forward		68,703.49
	General Fund - Fees - Estover/Berryfields	2,307.50					
	General Fund - Maintenace	3,522.00	6,100.99	2022			
				Mar-31			
					Clerk's Collection Account	4,319.54	
					Interest	4.11	4,323.65
	Balance carried forward		67,181.15		Write back of provisions		255.00
			73,282.14				73,282.14

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2023

Barclays - Treasurers Account 2022/2023

1st April 2022			31st March 2023		
Balance brought forward		101,936.36	Payments made during the year	27,727.94	
31st March 2023			Transfers	0.00	
Receipts during the year					27,727.94
Clerk's collection account	34,845.46				
Interest on deposit accounts	0.00	34,845.46			
			Balance carried forward		109,053.88
		136,781.82			**136,781.82**

National Savings - Treasurers Account 2022/2023

1st April 2022		31st March 2023	
Balance brought forward	3,033.30	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2023			
Interest on deposit accounts	2.82	Balance carried forward	3,036.12
	3,036.12		**3,036.12**

Barclays Bank PLc

Clients Premium Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2023	109,733.88
Less unpresented cheques	680.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	109,053.88

Cash balances as at 31st March 2023

Barclays Bank PLc

Clients Premium Account	**109,053.88**

National Savings

Investment Account per passbook	**3,036.12**
Total reconciled cash balances per accounts	**112,090.00**

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	92,336	93,365	*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	25,624	29,166	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	7,582	5,910	*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	0	0	*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	32,177	32,651	*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	93,365	95,790	*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	104,970	112,090	*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	809,000	809,000	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

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

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 4th April 2023

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

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

S:\Admin\Word\march5th\mins\11 apr 2023

March Fifth DDC
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2022

				Per Annual Return
Line 1	**Balances brought forward**			
	General Fund	23,632.70		
	Development charges account	68,703.49		
			92,336.19	**92,336**
Line 2	**Rates and Special Levies**			
	Agricultural rates	2,818.77		
	Special Levies	22,815.00		
	Penalty	6.00		
	Costs	0.00		
	Write-off	-15.74		
			25,624.03	**25,624**
Line 3	**Total other receipts**			
	Interest			
	General fund	1.41		
	Development charges account	4.11		
	Rent	200.00		
	Highland Water	1,625.94		
	Consents	0.00		
	Discharge contribution	4,319.54		
	Write back of provisions	1,430.61		
			7,581.61	**7,582**
Line 4	**Staff costs**			
	Wages/salaries	0.00		
	National insurance contributions	0.00		
	Pension costs	0.00		
	Travelling expenses	0.00		
			0.00	**0**
Line 5	**Loan repayments**			
	PWLB - Principal	0.00		
	PWLB - Interest	0.00		
			0.00	**0**
Line 6	**All other payments**			
	Precept	2,117.71		
	Rates, insurances, telephones	604.69		
	Repairs and renewals	2,201.09		
	Fuel	759.18		
	Drainworks	16,356.20		
	Administration	9,866.36		
	Development charges fees	271.49		
			32,176.72	**32,177**
Line 7	**Balances carried forward**			
	General Fund	26,183.96		
	Development charges account	67,181.15		
			93,365.11	**93,365**

Reconciliation
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6 93,365.11

RESOLVED

> That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Return, on behalf of the Commissioners, for the financial year ending 31st March 2023.

C.1262 Expenditure estimates and special levy and drainage rate requirements 2023/2024

The Commissioners considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2023/2024 and were informed by Miss Ablett that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 11% and 89%, viz;

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET 2023/2024

		Budget 2022/2023 £	Actual 2022/2023 £	Budget 2023/2024 £	Remarks	
					A - Includes estimate for increased premiums	
1	Insurances	650	617	825 [A]		
					B - Usage to end of year estimated from meter reads	
2	Repairs and renewals	3,700	2,929	2,400		
					C - Provision based on 5 year average and increased	
3	Fuel (electricity)	2,000	1,356 [B]	3,000 [C]	for new contract rates - see separate note	
4	Drainworks (including Environmental				D - Includes engineer's items	8,700
	measures)	11,500	6,333	11,650 [D]		
					E - Pump replacement - North Creek p/s	30,000
5	District Officers' fees	900	870	930	Telemetry - North Creek p/s	4,500
					Telemetry - South Creek p/s	4,500
6	Administration charge, Health and					39,000
	Safety contract, Audit fee, printing,					
	stationery, advertising,	9,500	9,135	9,700	F - Telemetry - North Creek p/s	4,626
					Telemetry - South Creek p/s	4,626
7	Environment Agency - Precept	2,160	2,160	2,225		9,252
8	Improvement works	39,000 [E]	9,252 [F]	3,000 [G]	G - Provision for future works	
		69,410	32,652	33,730	H - Development fund - 50% telemetry costs	4,626
					Grant funding - 50% telemetry costs	4,626
						9,252
	LESS Deposit Accounts interest,					
	Highland Water Contributions etc	40,390	10,801 [H]	1,809 [I]	I - Does not include 5% development for maintenace	
		29,020	21,850.35	31,920		

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Rate and levy requirements

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

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 11.00%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to Fenland District Council – 89.00%.

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £532.

In 2023/2024 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £4,837

Revenue cash balance in hand increased by £7,315 in 2022/2023 to - £33,499.

The estimated net expenditure for revenue and capital works of £31,920 in 2023/2024 is equivalent to:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 6.60p and

b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £28,410

In 2022/2023 a rate of 6.00p in the £ was raised together with a Special levy of £25,829 on Fenland District Council.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Commissioners

April 2023

Miss Ablett advised that when considering the rate for 2023/2024 members should take into account the significantly higher unit rates for electricity as from 1st April 2023. She explained the electricity estimate for 2023/2024 was based on a 5-year average to take account of the impact of climate change, but it did not include any provision for possible extremes.

Miss Ablett added that members should be aware that due to the increased unit rates, the direct pumping costs for a rainfall event would be significantly higher than the amount estimated.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £31,921 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £3,510 and £28,411 respectively.

iv) That a rate of 6.6p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That a Special levy of £28,411 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.

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

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

C.1263 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That the next Meeting of the Commissioners be held on Tuesday 9th April 2024.

…………………………………………..
Chairman

………………………
Date