MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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5th April 2024

Dear Board Members

Upcoming meeting of the Board
Tuesday 9th April 2024

Please find overleaf the agenda for the meeting of the Board to be hosted at the Middle Level Offices, March PE15 0AH at 7pm on Tuesday 9th April 2024.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS AGENDA INCLUDES CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS. APART FROM THE COPY RETAINED WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES THEY WILL BE DESTROYED FOLLOWING THE MEETING AND MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT THEY MUST NOT BE DISCUSSED WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN A BOARD MEMBER.

AFTER THE MEETING PLEASE DESTROY YOUR COPY OF THE PAPERS OR RETURN THEM TO THE OFFICE TO BE DESTROYED.

As you'll be aware, we administer thirty Boards that mostly all meet within similar date ranges. Thank you to the majority of Members who already confirm their attendance proactively.

Please help us manage your Board effectively by **proactively letting Polly know as soon as possible, by telephone or email, if you can attend the meeting, or not, or if you're uncertain.** This results in less abortive time and cost to the running of all Boards.

It is important that we have early confirmation whether or not the Board will be quorate.

Yours truly

P BURROWS, FCIWEM C.WEM CEnv

Clerk to the Board

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday 9th April 2024 – 7pm

Middle Level Offices, March, PE15 0AH

Agenda:

Item No	*Topic*	*Format*	*Lead*
1	Welcome & apologies	Verbal	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	Verbal	Chair
3	Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Pages 3 - 20	Chair
4	Constitution & Membership • Attendance • Vacancies & appointments • Composition and amalgamations • Training	Pages 21 - 23	Clerk
5	Clerk's Report	Pages 24 - 30	Clerk
6	Environment Officer's Report	Verbal	Clerk
7	Chairman's Items	Verbal	Chair
8	Consulting Engineer's Reports, including: • Capital Programme & FCRM Grant-In-Aid	Pages 31- 46	Clerk or Engineer
9	Health & Safety	Pages 47 - 50	Chair
10	District Officer's Report	Verbal	DO
11	Governance • Banking • Annual accounts of the Board for the year ended 31st March 2023 • Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2023 • Risk Management Assessment/Strategy • Review of internal controls • Exercise of Public Rights • Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments • Transparency code for smaller authorities (if relevant) • Defra IDB 1 Returns • Annual Governance Statement	Pages 51 - 53 Pages 54 - 58 Pages 59 - 69 Pages 70 - 71 Pages 72 - 81 Page 82	Clerk
12	Finance Report: looking back • Finance officer's review • Budgeting • Payments 2023/2024 • Highland Water Contributions • Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2023/2024 • Annual Return 2023/2024	Page 83 - 84 Page 85 Page 86 Pages 87 - 90 Page 91	Clerk
13	Finance Report: looking forward • Finance Officer's summary • Fees, remuneration and subscriptions • Determination of land for rating purposes Confidential papers • Rate arrears Confidential papers • Precept to the Environment Agency • Rating Estimates for 2024/2025 • Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements or 2024/2025	Pages 92 - 93 Page 94 Page 95	Clerk
14	Date of Next Meeting	Verbal	Chair
15	Any other business	Verbal	Chair

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.

iii) Application(s) for byelaw consent

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) Delegation of signatory on consents

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.

RESOLVED

Planning & Consenting

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

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.

Changes to Electricity Supply Contracts

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;

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.

RESOLVED

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

C.1241 Capital Improvement Programme

The Commissioners considered their future capital improvement programme.

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;

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 will refer to the report received from Cope Safety Management following their visit to the District on the 5th January 2023,

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.

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

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

(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.

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%.

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.

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	**MARCH 5TH DDC**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Polly Tombleson**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the current status of its membership and the role they each play as members serving the interests of the Board.
B. Review attendance records and identify any resolutions as necessary.
C. Determine whether there are composition changes and/or amalgamations it wishes to progress.
D. Reenforce the need for members to view all five 'Good Governance' videos.
E. Identify any topic areas for additional training, as well as any inspection/site visit requirements.

1. Current status

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

	Elected Members	Appointed Members	Total Members	Quorum
Composition	9	N/A		5
Actual	9	7 FDC	16	
Vacancies	0		0	

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

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary
1	Emma Alterton	Ratepayer	
2	Tony Alterton	Ratepayer	
3	Paul Beeton	?	
4	Steven Bushell	Nominee of Ratepayer (Hopkin Farms)	
5	Paul Hayes	Ratepayer	
6	Geoff Hopkin	Ratepayer	
7	Tony Hopkin	Ratepayer	Chair & District Officer
8	Jack Lilley	Nominee of Ratepayer (P L Hayes)	
9	Andrew Payne	Ratepayer	Vice-Chair

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

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

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

No	Name	Appointing Council	Commentary (one of three categories)
1	Chris Boden	FDC	Councillor

2	Jan French	FDC	Councillor
3	Stuart Harris	FDC	Councillor
4	Charlie Marks	FDC	Councillor
5	Alex Miscandlon	FDC	Councillor
6	Tim Taylor	FDC	Councillor
7	Andrew Woollard	FDC	Councillor

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

2. Attendance

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

Elected Members

No	Name	11/4/2023	12/4/2022	13/4/2021	7/4/2020
1	Emma Alterton	Present	Present	Present	Present
2	Tony Alterton	Present	Present	Present	Present
3	Paul Beeton	apologies	Present	Present	Present
4	Steven Bushell	apologies		N/A	N/A
5	Paul Hayes	Present	Present	Apologies	Apologies
6	Geoff Hopkin	apologies		Present	Present
7	Tony Hopkin	Present		Present	Present
8	Jack Lilley	Present	Present		Apologies
9	Andrew Payne	Present	Present	Present	Present

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022	2/11/2021
1	Tony Hopkin	Present			

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	11/4/2023	12/4/2022	13/4/2021	7/4/2020
1	Chris Boden (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Jan French (FDC)	Present			Apologies
3	Stuart Harris (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Charlie Marks (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Alex Miscandlon (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Tim Taylor (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Andrew Woollard (FDC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 To consider the annual appointments of Chair & Vice-Chair

4. Composition and amalgamations

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

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

5. Training

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

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

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

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

Author Name: Polly Tombleson
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	**MARCH 5TH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**CLERK'S REPORT**
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the content of the report and feedback on items as appropriate.
B. Support the proposed approach to determining the next electricity contract.
C. In determining their valuations for insurance purposes, recognise the limitations associated with their current valuations and the risks they hold of being underinsured.
D. Boards are asked to note the banking overview and that unless there is collective approval, they will not be maximising their interest on available balances.

1. MLC Services available for IDBs

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The IDB governance future within the Middle Level of the Fens

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

1. struggle for membership and attendance.

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

2.2 The Chairs explored the following question;
Beneath the surface, how healthy is your Board today, for tomorrow and for the next generation?
- What worries you?
- Do we have a good picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of our Boards?
- How do we ensure risks and issues are tackled proactively?
- How can we better share success, learning and support across Boards?

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

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

2.5 On 15th February 2024 the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Board Members who sit on more than one IDB within the Middle Level (and those outside the catchment that we administer) had been invited to an informal session in Ramsey to share thoughts about the future IDB governance landscape within the Middle Level and whether action was needed to ensure this was resilient for the future.

2.6 The was consensus from those who attended that we needed to act and a small group has been identified to draft an initial case for change. This will be shared when ready for wider inputs and views.

3. Association of Drainage Authorities - Summary

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

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

3.3 In February 2024, ADA hosted their second Environment Day, held at Park Farm, Thorney. Sof Lloyd presented jointly with Robin Price of Anglian Water on the topic of IDB and water quality.

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

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

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

4. Fens 2100+

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

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

4.3 Projects in Fens 2100+

Fens-wide investment framework

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

Catchment-scale asset investment plans

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

Catchment-baseline reports

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

5. Electricity and Insurance

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

5.2 Complaints have been escalated to Corona's Managing Director with the request to release us from our contract with them at no penalty. This has resulted in a great impetus in terms of rectifying the issues, but at the time of writing the situation is far from perfect.

5.3 The additional time this has taken our Assistant Treasurer has been significant and the scale of pumping has compounded the issue. This has meant developing a plan for our next contract is behind where we'd like to be and will need due focus over the coming months, bringing together a small group of IDB Chairs to review options and ultimately decide on the next contract arrangements.

5.4 OFGEM's new approach to regulation has had an unexpected and considerable impact upon the standing charges within our electricity portfolio. Unless the regulations change this level of standing charge is now baked into future bills regardless of our supplier.

5.5 We have flagged the impact this issue will have on Highland Water Claims with the Environment Agency.

5.6 We responded to OFGEMs review of Standing Charges and also escalated the issues and our response with local MPs. However, it was the interest of BBC Countryfile who saw a MLC 'tweet' about the issue, that triggered OFGEM to reach out directly to ADA and we joined a session with their policy leads to discuss the issue.

5.7 From this and following BBC Countryfile, we understand there to be a recognition that out sector has been unfairly and unintentionally impacted and there's a commitment to review and address.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Banking

6.1 As has previously been reported, due to regulatory changes from our bankers, the type of accounts held by all authorities had changed. The current arrangements within our delegations from all the Boards we administer are that we have free banking in return for a non-interest-bearing current account and an interest-bearing Business Premium account within which higher interest could be gained on 'surplus' balances by putting them on deposit for fixed periods. The minimum balance for the Business Premium account is £100,000 and higher rates of interest are available for higher deposit amounts and longer periods of investments.

6.2 For the larger Boards with >£100,000 available, the Treasurer actively transfers funding between accounts and monitors the situation monthly, balancing the need to have funds available for outgoings versus the ability to maximise income. This is relatively resource intensive.

6.3 Following discussion on maximising banking interest at some IDB meetings last year, consideration had been given to Boards 'pooling' deposit funds into a single Business Premium account to enable all Boards to access better rates of interest on balances. To allow this, Boards balances would have to be transferred into a single named account from which the deposit investments would be made.

6.4 In order to gauge views on this outline proposal, it has been raised at IDB meetings over the winter period, at which reservations were raised by all Boards. There were reservations about 'investing' Board balances through a third-party name (another IDB) and the possible security of balances under these circumstances.

6.5 Given that none of the Boards approached approved to proceed along these lines and under these circumstances we will not be actively developing or promoting this option further unless being directly requested to by all Boards.

6.6 With regards to balance security above the FCA Compensation limit, consideration could be given to opening an account with National Savings and Investments where balances are fully backed by the Government. However, to operate these accounts would need to be an online account with mandated authority given to a single person as 'administrator.' As this delegation was an area of concern raised with regards to deposit balance investments, this has not been pursued and is left for the future consideration and instruction.

6.7 Boards are asked to note that they will therefore not be maximising their potential interest individually and collectively.

7. Rating

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

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

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

7.4 ADA has recently concluded that the Association is not best placed to drive the design or own or manage any DRS future software as we do not have the experience or knowledge to do that. We can, however, very much help administratively support an active working group and we will be setting up a meeting in Spring/Summer 2024 to seek volunteers for this working group.

8. Lowland Agricultural Peat

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. MLC Staffing

9.1 Lorna McShane, Assistant Clerk/Solicitor, left the organisation in March 2024 and we have successfully recruited Ruth Martin to a new role of Lead Clerk. Ruth starts in April 2024. Ruth brings survey, assets, drainage and engineering experience from her time with Breheny contractors, Anglian Water and Haskoning. Since 2008, she has had leadership roles focussed on property, estates and facilities management and joins us from a charity where she leads the facilities management for 48 leased properties across East Anglia.

9.2 This role marks an adjustment for us all, for the Commissioners and for our services to IDBs in that we no longer have in-house legal qualified expertise. Ruth will have a key role in pooling and using the knowledge and experience we have within the office and within our networks, whilst learning and developing her own knowledge. The intent is to develop and drive a clearer suite of Legal and Estates work packages, using external suppliers where appropriate in a more considered and structured manner.

9.3 Sofi Lloyd our Environment Officer has been promoted into a new role of Ecology & Environmental Services Manager. The Environment Act 2021 was a game-changer for IDBs and our journey towards enhancing the environment as part of our delivering our wide range of services now comes with greater expectations, greater responsibilities, greater scrutiny, greater risk and a necessity to work in partnership and collaboration with an increasing variety of groups and organisations. There is also now the opportunity we need to unlock to use our land, assets, operations and waterways to enable the biodiversity net gain responsibilities of others and bring in some income. The MLC Executive Committee recognised this and the need to scale up our ecological capacity and capability. We will be looking to recruit to an Ecologist/Environment Officer role reporting to Sofi in due course as part of the suite of new roles needed to enable the delivery of the increased MLC and IDB capital programme.

9.4 One of the other new roles needed to enable increased capital delivery is within our M&E team and we welcomed Richard Wilmer to the organisation in February 2024.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		8
Meeting:	**MARCH FIFTH DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME**	
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Nicola Oldfield**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. **Provide its views on item 3.3 a) *New developments and the use of SuDS.***
B. **Confirm how it wishes to respond to the following application under item 3.4 d) *Erection of 18 dwellings with associated infrastructure and the formation of 2 balancing ponds and public open space at Phase B Fink Developments (MLC Ref No 545) on land to the east of Berryfield, March.***
C. **Review and approve its Capital Programme taking account of the advice in Section 4.**
D. **Nominate two representatives to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief for the System Study.**
E. **Advise if it would like the MLC to take quarterly meter readings at a cost of £60 per station.**
F. **Review the pumping station key dates provided in Appendix 4 at 4.1 and advise if there are any discrepancies or any additional information can be provided.**

1. Overview of services provided to the Board

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

- Mechanical & Electrical (M&E): Providing general advice, routine maintenance, minor works and inspections. Supporting development of capital works programme.
- Capital works: Advising the Board and undertaking client, project and contract management roles.
- Operational services: Maintenance advice, planning and arrangements for the Board's catchment area and designated watercourses. Planning and organising remedial works at pumping stations and structures throughout the district. Attendance at annual Board meetings.
- GIS & Survey.
- Strategic Planning: Inputs on behalf of the Board to relevant spatial plans (eg Local Plans), flood & water strategies and plans (eg Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans, Fens 2100+).
- Planning and consenting: Responding to Planning Applications and related matters on behalf of the Board and advising on and issuing byelaw consents. A list of the planning, consent and infiltration device applications responded to since the last report are provided as Appendix 2.

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

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

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

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

2. Chief Engineer's summary

2.1 The new process for delivering grant-aided schemes is now in progress. As more grant-aided projects come online, the MLC engineers' workload will need to be balanced with additional resources. We are using a number of different external consultants and will be monitoring their performance, using this to inform our future delivery model. The Board is reminded that should it wish to progress any capital schemes that grant-in-aid may be available and any future proposals should be included in the forward capital forecasts provided to the Environment Agency.

2.2 Recent storms (Babet and Henk) may have provided a good opportunity to collect additional data about how the catchment responds to rainfall, however resources are always stretched during an event. We will be able to use telemetry data where it exists, but we encourage the Board members to gather evidence in the form of photos or water level marks (where it is safe to do so), and any other information about the system during an event, which will be useful in supporting any grant-in-aid applications for future works.

2.3 Fens Reservoir

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

3. Technical Services

3.1 Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

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

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

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

NB: No specific sites were identified by Atkins within March.

The meeting notes advise that:

> **"March**
> Background information on flood risk mechanisms and history (LH): There is complex interaction between flood sources in March, with many small pockets of historical flooding and modelled at-risk areas throughout March. This means isolated high-cost schemes are unlikely to be cost beneficial.
>
> RW provided background and information on the small scale schemes currently ongoing or recently completed within March.
>
> It was mentioned that owing to the groundwater and geology of this area, soakaway systems will not be effective.
>
> It is understood that there is significant interaction between the surface water sewer system and the old River Nene through March, however there is no known hydraulic model fully simulating this interaction.
>
> Whilst there would be benefit of this representation in a full Integrated Catchment Model (ICM), the development of an ICM is not considered cost beneficial at this stage and will not be pursued for the Cambs LLFA PDP. Nonetheless it will be retained in the option list as a future aspiration.
>
> Several people mentioned that there is currently uncertainty with the drainage and watercourse network within March and the condition of that network. There was consensus that several parties (MLC, AWS and CCC) would all benefit from detailed understanding of the network and its condition, and this could be obtained through CCTV and/or watercourse survey.
>
> *Next steps:*
>
> 1. Further discussion about partnership funding to complete CCTV / survey of the drainage and watercourse system throughout March; and
>
> 2. Potential local policy considerations, i.e. Critical Drainage Area (CDA), local guidance, SPD inclusion."

3.2 High Rainfall Event

Members will recall that in last year's report reference was made to the extent of the previous and revised critical areas. Following further consideration of the principle the following designations have been developed:

A. Business as usual – Areas where there are no known problems that cannot be solved through the Board's "day-to-day activities".

B. Areas of concern – An area subject to flooding which is unlikely to be solved through the Board's "day-to-day activities" and may require protection, intervention and/or investment by the relevant RMA(s).

C. Acute drainage areas – A geographical area with multiple or interlinked sources of flood risk where there is a need for a higher standard of water level management than normal to ensure that any new development will not increase flood risk that affects people, properties and local infrastructure and may require protection, intervention and/or investment by the relevant RMA(s).

Neither items B nor C are the same as a "Critical Drainage Area" (CDA) which has a specific meaning in flood risk terms ie an area that has critical drainage problems and which has been notified to the planning authority as such by the Environment Agency in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

3.3 Summary of Key Planning Issues

a) ***New developments and the use of SuDS***

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

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

The introduction of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act may assist, particularly if the MLC represent the Board on the SuDS Approval Board (SAB). The implementation of this has now been set back further, until the end of the year at the earliest.

Several other Boards have raised concerns about the installation and efficiency of SuDS facilities particularly in the longer term and the adverse impacts on their systems, due to increased flows and channel maintenance to serve developed areas. Some have requested contributions over and above the current method of determination and this is currently being investigated.

The matter was briefly discussed at a CPFloW Partnership meeting and other IDBs and Cambridge City Council raised similar concerns.

The Board's views on this would be appreciated.

b) ***Consultation on planning matters***

The contents of the first paragraph of resolution ii) of Minute C.1239 Clerk's Report are noted:

> "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."

No instruction to include any items within this report has been received from the Board's Chairman. However, the Consulting Engineer has included those items where there are outstanding resolutions/matters arising or where there is a need to highlight areas of concern to the Board.

c) ***Specific items***

The contents of the resolutions in respect of C.1240 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters have been noted and the current position is as follows:

Item iii) - Provision of a storm tank at March Water Recycling Centre (WRC), Creek Fen Road, March – Anglian Water Services Ltd (MLC Ref No 503) – The issue of contacting Anglian Water concerning the over run at the junction is in hand.

Item iv) - Residential development adjacent to Hillcroft, Creek Road, - Mr Brownlow & Ms Davis (MLC Ref No 223, 534 & 539) - A full planning application (MLC Ref No 540) was submitted to Fenland District Council in October. The application is currently shown on the planning portal as pending consideration.

Item v) (a) – Erection of 6 dwellings on land to the north of March Braza Club, (Lavender Close) Elm Road (MLC Ref No 480) – This matter is currently being discussed with the agent.

Item v) (b) 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) - A maintenance plan was received in 2021.

Item vi) Piping of watercourse at Point 7 - The residents concerned have been advised that the Commissioners had, from an operational perspective, agreed "in principle", subject to its requirements being met, for them to pipe the drain at Point 7 adding that the work must be carried out to the Board's specifications and satisfaction and at no cost to the Board.

The Board is reminded that the piping and filling of long lengths of open watercourse is contrary to national (Environment Agency), local (County Council) and the Board's policy [Item i M5-governance.pdf (middlelevel.wpenginepowered.com)]

This is primarily due to the adverse effects on flood defence, ecology and other aspects that are likely to arise.

It should also be noted that flooding has previously been reported in the area, therefore, extreme caution MUST be taken during the decision-making process.

The applicant has been advised of the following comments from the Environment Officer, which the Board will also need to be aware of.

"Regards the above culvert application, the obstacles that both the applicant and the IDB will need to resolve to be able to compliantly progress are as follows:

- The works will require an ecological survey to identify habitats and species present and identify any protected species in the vicinity that may be impacted by the works.
- Demonstrate & present proposals for approval, of how the culvert will conserve and enhance biodiversity in line with their statutory duty. Usually this will mean the creation of a length of open ditch, in line, as close as possible to the point at which it has been lost, of equal or greater length to that which has been lost, or improve the quality of an existing ditch on the same system, of at least double the length of that which has been lost.
- Be advised that the policy is no culverting except in exceptional circumstances for access."

The Board is also advised to be cautious in approving this due to the precedent this may set for other applications in the area which may result in a challenge to the IDB if not approved.

d) ***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) and Erection of 18 dwellings with associated infrastructure and the formation of 2 balancing ponds and public open space at Phase B Fink Developments (MLC Ref No 545) on land to the east of Berryfield, March***

A. Further to the contents of the first paragraph of resolution ii) of Minute C.1239 Clerk's Report the Board is reminded that the March 2022 Consulting Engineers Report included the following:

"Both a SuDS Maintenance Plan and Watercourse Management Plan were submitted and following some discussion these met with the Commissioners' requirements.

Documents relating to the "Precedent Transfer", "Incorporation Certificate" and Property Management Company were forwarded to the Middle Level Commissioners' Solicitor."

During July, the District Council was advised that:

"Further to our previous correspondence, discussions have been undertaken with the applicant, its engineering consultant and solicitor in a positive manner to resolve the issues raised both by the Commissioners and the Middle Level Commissioners.

<u>Condition 5 – Surface Water Disposal</u>
During the above-mentioned discussions, the applicant has confirmed that:

i) The surface water discharge emanating from the site will be at the greenfield rate.

ii) The on-site surface water management systems will be the responsibility of the individual plot owners and the management company, for the communal system. The latter will have rights of access to enter the individual plots to undertake maintenance on the communal surface water management systems.

iii) The watercourse forming the southern boundary of the site adjacent to the [sic] will be maintained to a satisfactory condition by the management company.

iv) The details of the works to be undertaken are included in a SuDS Management Plan and Watercourse Management Plan, both of which will be included in the "Homeowners Pack", and the Deed of Sale.

Condition 6 – Foul Water Disposal
Treated foul effluent water discharges into the MLC system via March WRC. The appropriate documentation has been received and is currently being processed.

As a result, it is considered that the previously raised points of concern have been answered with any adverse impacts upon our respective systems, our ratepayers and the natural, built and waterborne environment being reduced and this meets with our approval."

B. Further to the Commissioners' last Meeting Report a planning application was submitted to the District Council during the summer for Phase B an extension of the site currently being developed.

In accordance with item ii) Planning & Consenting of Minute C.1239 Clerk's Report which includes:

"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."

An e-mail was sent to all the Members requesting guidance on how the Board wished to proceed. Unfortunately, the response to both this and a subsequent message was poor and failed to meet quorum, as a consequence no further action has been taken.

It is understood that the application is Pending Consideration. Therefore, there is still the opportunity for the Board to respond.

The Board is asked to confirm how it wishes to respond to this application.

4. Capital Programme

4.1 The Board's Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1. Future capital works will be guided by the results of the proposed system study detailed below.

4.2 In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GIA) from the Environment Agency, there is an allocation to undertake a System Study to identify any improvements needed in the system. This is currently programmed for 2024/25 and will include channel surveys, structural condition assessments of pumping stations and other assets, hydraulic modelling, economic and environmental assessments, and development of recommendations/solutions with the aim of securing further grant for the delivery of those solutions.

4.3 For the March Fifth System Study, we will draft a Project Initiation Form (PIF) for approval by the Board. This will briefly describe the perceived problem, aims and objectives of the Study and will be used to provide a scope of work for appointing consultants. I will contact the Chair to arrange a meeting to review and finalise the PIF ahead of appointing consultants to work on the Study. I hope that the Board's representatives will work closely with the appointed project team to enable the consultants to undertake a meaningful assessment of the district and, ultimately, provide suitable recommendations for future management.

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

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Programme
Appendix 2: List of applications since last meeting
Appendix 3: Operational Services Report
Appendix 4: M&E Report

Appendix 1

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Capital Improvement Programme (2024/2025)

		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	0.0	0.0	30.0	36.0	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	0.0	0.0	6.0	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**	**0**	**0**	**36**	**36**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**12**	**0**	**205**	**298**

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
541	F/YR23/0161/O	Mrs S Vawser	Residential (3 dwellings)	Nene Parade, March
542	F/YR23/0376/F	Ashewell Developments	Change of use (Agricultural to equestrian)	Flaggrass Hill Road, March
543		NUMBER NOT USED		
544	F/YR23/0528/F	Mr Brownlow & Ms Davies	Residential (6 dwellings)	Creek Road, March
545	F/YR23/0550/F	Fink Developments	Residential (18 dwellings)	Berryfield, March
546	F/YR23/0702/F	Prestige Pipelaying JV Ltd	Office	Norwood Industrial Estate, Norwood Road, March
547	F/YR23/0729/F	Mr Kevin Kidman	Residence	New Park fronting Newlands Avenue, March Cambridgeshire
548	F/YR23/0835/F	Mr R Smith	Residence (Extension)	Elm Road, March
549	F/YR23/0880/F	Mr P Gillin	Residence	Creek Road, March
550	F/YR23/0909/F	Mr P Hussey	Residential (4 dwellings)	Elm Road, March
551	F/YR24/0046/O	Mr P Wilkinson	Residence	Wigstones Road, March

There have been no applications for Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) or (to discharge to a watercourse) granted since the last meeting.

The following infiltration device application has been acknowledged since the last meeting:

MLC Ref	*Council Ref*	*Option 1 (Self-certification) or Option 2 (Checking Form)*	*Applicant*	*Location*	Date acknowledged
551	F/YR24/0046/O	Option 1	Mr P Wilkinson	Wigstones Road, March	9/5/23

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	9
Meeting:	**MARCH FIFTH DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES**
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Morgan Lakey**

1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance

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

Harrison Agricultural Contractors carried out the Board's 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 Board's approval, the Board's 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.

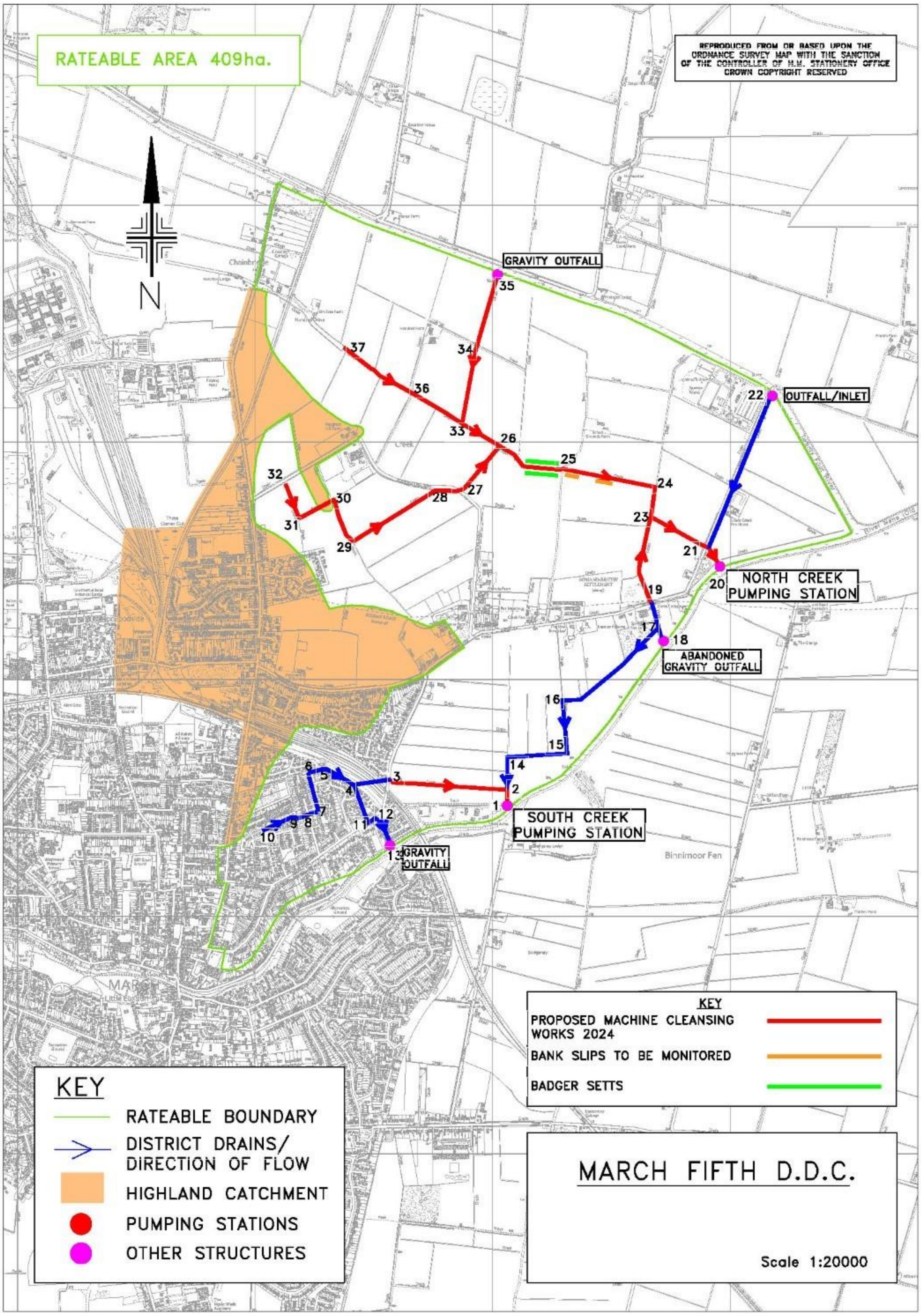
A pre-harvest district inspection last summer indicated that the majority of the Board's district drains were in a satisfactory condition and being maintained to a good standard. The approved machine cleansing, that was postponed the previous year due to the sewer pipe leakage, was successfully completed along reach 14-15-16-17-18 of the South Creek Pump drains.

A recent joint inspection of the Board's district drains was undertaken with the Chairman. The inspection indicated that the majority of drains are currently in a satisfactory condition, however as the Board's 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 Board's drains within the North Creek area are in a generally satisfactory condition, however the inspection highlighted sporadic early season stands of emergent aquatic vegetation in the Flagrass Hill drains, continuing through to the main pump drain. It is recommended the affected reach is treated with an application of roundup herbicide followed by light machine cleansing after harvest of the adjacent crops. A provisional sum has been included in the estimated costs for the proposed works to be completed and the plan on the following page shows the extent of the works and their locations.

Aquatic vegetation, Reach 33-36


RATEABLE AREA 409ha.
REPRODUCED FROM OR BASED UPON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP WITH THE SANCTION OF THE CONTROLLER OF H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED
N
GRAVITY OUTFALL
OUTFALL/INLET
NORTH CREEK PUMPING STATION
ABANDONED GRAVITY OUTFALL
SOUTH CREEK PUMPING STATION
GRAVITY OUTFALL
Binnimoor Fen
KEY
PROPOSED MACHINE CLEANSING WORKS 2024
BANK SLIPS TO BE MONITORED
BADGER SETTS
KEY
RATEABLE BOUNDARY
DISTRICT DRAINS/ DIRECTION OF FLOW
HIGHLAND CATCHMENT
PUMPING STATIONS
OTHER STRUCTURES
MARCH FIFTH D.D.C.
Scale 1:20000

It was also noted there are several signs of bank subsidence along reach 24-25-26. Two of the small slips have been identified on previous inspections and are being regularly monitored for further deterioration. However, further upstream the recent persistent wet weather has saturated the bank profile, causing the collapse of two well established badger setts. As these reaches fall under the proposed machine cleansing works, any remedial works can be carried out whilst the contractor's excavator is on site. Any proposed work within the vicinity of the active badger setts will require relevant licensing to be completed to ensure all works remain compliant. Details of relevant training and compliance will be provided by the MLC Ecologist for the Board to discuss further.

	
Small slips to be monitored, reach 24-25	**Collapsed badger setts, reach 25-26**

South Creek Pumped System

The recent inspection indicated that the Board's drains within the South Creek area are currently in a good condition following last year's machine cleansing works. 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.

Creek Road/Newlands Avenue/Foxglove Way – Gravity System

Watercourses in the Foxglove Way area remain in a 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 fewer 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 Board's watercourse can be dealt with swiftly and to monitor for potential recolonisation of invasive, non-native aquatic vegetation.

2. Estimated Costs of Anticipated Drain Maintenance and Weed Control Programme

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 Board's 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 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 20-21	Item		Sum	200.00
	• Reach 26-27-28-29-30-31-32	1300m	@	1.20	1560.00
	• Reach 26-33-36-37	800m	@	1.20	960.00
	• Reach 33-34-35	700m	@	1.20	840.00
	• Reach 19-23	500m	@	1.20	600.00
	• Reach 21-23-24-25-26	1100m	@	1.50	1650.00
4.	Provisional Item 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 Board, arrangements and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works	Item	Sum		950.00
				TOTAL	**£12,360.00**

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.

Author Name: Morgan Lakey
Role: Assistant Operations Engineer

Appendix 4

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	9
Meeting:	**MARCH FIFTH DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Dave Bantoft**

1. M&E key messages and advice

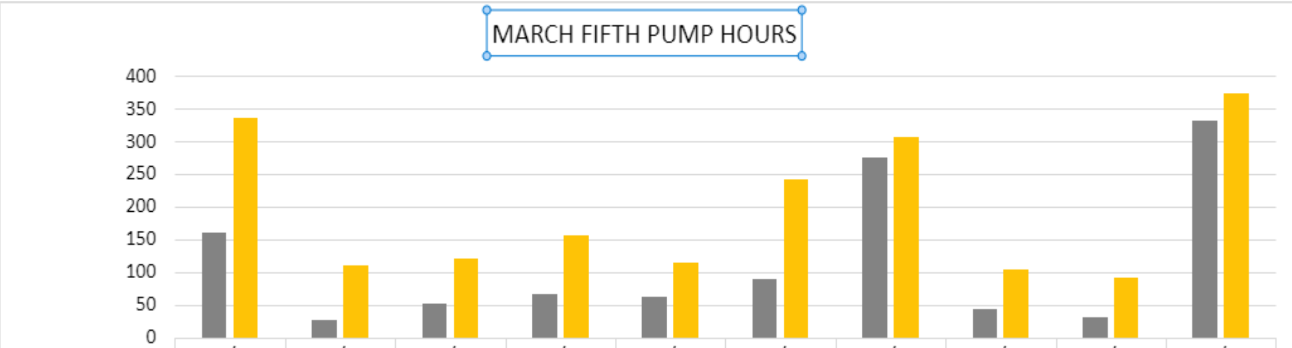
1.1 Other than matters previously reported or detailed below only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant appears to be mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

1.2 Due to the volatility of the electricity market and issues with meters, 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.

Please can 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.

If you are unable to provide readings, or would prefer, the MLC can take quarterly readings; these will be at a cost to the Board for the time and mileage involved. Please approve this if it is required. Approximate cost will be £60 per station per quarter.

2. Pumping summary



	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
North Creek	160	28	52	66	62	89	275	43	31	332
South Creek	337	110	121	157	115	242	306	105	93	374

3. Inspections

3.1 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are due and are booked in for 26th March 2024. Cost £100 per station.

4. Pumping Station Key Dates

4.1 **Please review the pumping station key dates below, if there are any discrepancies or you can add any details, please let me know. The key dates are an important reference and will feed into the upcoming Key Health Indicators and District Studies.**

Station				Weedscreen		Telemetry
Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul	Controls	Bars	Cleaner	Telemetry
1976	1990	1990	1976	1976	n/a	2023
1976	2005	2005	2005	1976	n/a	2023

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

Site Safety Inspection Record

March 5th IDB

Complete

Name of organisation:	March 5th IDB
Date of site visit	04.01.2024 09:13 GMT
Address of inspected premises	Flaggrass Farm Flaggrass Hill Road March PE15 0BX
Name of Advisor	Martin Clark
Time of arrival at site:	04.01.2024 09:00 GMT
Audit Name	March 5th IDB

Audit

An opening meeting was held with

Tony Hopkin

Have there been any accidents since our last visit?	No

None recorded

Have there been any new starters since our last visit?	No

None recorded

1

No significant issues were reported in the operation since the previous site inspection on 05.01.2023. North creek pumping station was visited and no issues were observed.

The current high water levels were discussed and it was understood that pumping stations have been very busy as a result.


Photo 1

2

Fly tipping was discussed and this has been an ongoing issue in the local,area with evidence of fly tipping observed on the access road leading to South Creek pumping station.

No recent fly tipping has occurred close to the pump stations.

It was understood that the council are informed when fly tipping is discovered and that the council then carry's out follow up operations.

3

South Creek pumping station was visited and it was pleasing to note that the observations raised on 05.0.2023 have now been effectively closed, specifically the location of the upper barrier at the weed screen cleaner and the fitting of a toe board.

The relevant entries on the photographic risk assent index will be closed accordingly.

The condition of the overhead electrical power lines was discussed, it was observed that the footings of the pole closest to,the pump station can now be seen and that excessive rainfall has caused the poles to lean further than seen on the previous visits.

It is recommended that the situation is monitored and that the local electricity provider responsible for maintaining the overhead power lines is informed of the general,condition / concerns.


Photo 2


Photo 3


Photo 4

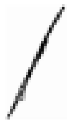

Photo 5

Photographic Risk Assessment

Signature of person informed

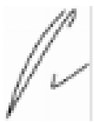
Signature of person informed 1

Signature of person informed



Signed by advisor on behalf of Tony Hopkin.
04.01.2024 10:26 GMT

Advisor's signature



Martin Clark
04.01.2024 10:26 GMT

Departure time	04.01.2024 10:26 GMT

Photographic Risk Assessments closed out during the visit.

05.01.2023 1

Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments	0 From 0 to 99

Media summary

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

Photo 5

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		11
Meeting:	**MARCH 5TH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**GOVERNANCE**	
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023
B. Note the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.
C. Review and approve the updated Risk Management Strategy.
D. Highlight if there are any specific risks or issues not covered within its Risk Management Strategy that may need review ahead of the next formal update.
E. Advise on any changes they wish to make to insured values.
F. Note the system of financial Internal Controls that are in place and consider whether additional controls are required within the running and decision making of the Board.
G. Exercise of Public Rights
H. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments
I. Continue with a limited assurance review approach.
J. Note the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra.
K. Authorise the Chairman to sign the annual return for 2024.

1. Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) and Internal Auditor

1.1 The AGAR provides the framework by which the governance of the Board is assessed. The Board's last AGAR is available on its page via www.middlelevel.gov.uk

1.2 The Board/Commissioners to consider:

- the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2023. (Appendix 1)
- the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2023. (Appendix 2)

1.3 The Board are reminded that Whitings LLP were appointed as internal auditor for a five-year period commencing 1st April 2023 (financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28).

1.4 The Board is asked to act on the advice of the Auditor within its decision making.

2. Internal Controls

2.1 Within the financial operations at the Middle Level offices there are a series of controls in place to ensure the segregation of duties, so as far as practical within a small workforce, that no one person has control of a single operation from start to finish. The Internal Controls are available via the website within the 'Governance' section on the Board's page.

2.2 Note the Financial Code for the Board is included within its 'Governance Documents' also available on its page via www.middlelevel.gov.uk

2.3 The Board needs to ensure there is adequate separation of duties within its running and decision making. Members are asked to refresh themselves as to the Member Code of

Conduct (available within the Governance Documents on the Board's webpage) and ensure their declarations of interests are clear and up-to-date.

2.4 If a Board Member (or their business) undertakes contracted work (or bids for such work) for the Board it is recommended that they be excluded from any decision making as a matter of course and that appropriate contractual arrangements are in place.

2.5 If the Member also has a lead role for the Board (eg Chairman/Vice Chairman) then it is important that the Board puts in place safeguards to ensure a separation of duties, particularly being clear on who is acting as lead client for the contractor.

3. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

3.1 The Board's Risk Management Strategy has been recently updated and is available as Appendix 5. It is due for formal review and update in 2027. The Board are asked to review and approve the updated strategy.

3.2 The insured values for the Board's assets are detailed below:

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
INSURED VALUES OF FIXED ASSETS

	As At 1st April 2024
North Creek Pumping Station	473,288.00
South Creek Pumping Station	479,814.00
	953,102.00

4. IDB1

4.1 The Board's IDB1 return to Defra for the year 2022/23 is included as Appendix 4.

5. Annual Governance Statement:

5.1 To review and complete the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 5)

6. Exercise of Public Rights

6.1 For completion of the Annual Governance Statement the Board is required to confirm that they provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

6.2 In order to warrant a positive response to this assertation the authority needs to have taken the following actions in respect of the previous annual return:

Exercise of Public Rights: The authority provided for the exercise of public rights set out in Sections 26 and 27 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Part 5 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires the RFO to have published including on the authority's website or other website:

- Sections 1 and 2 of the annual return
- A declaration that the status of the statement of accounts is 'unaudited;' and
- A statement that sets out details of how public rights can be exercised, as set out in Regulation 15(2)(b), which includes the period for the exercise of public rights.

6.3 In addition, a notice of the conclusion of the external auditor's limited assurance review of the annual return, together with relevant accompanying information, has been published in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. We also display the 'Local Authority Accounts – A Summary of Your Rights' with the notice.

6.4 The Clerk to refer 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.

7. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments:

7.1 The clerk to report.

8. Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

8.1 In previous years the Board has continued with a limited assurance review approach and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Appendix 1	**Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 2023**
Appendix 2	**Internal Audit Report**
Appendix 3	**Risk Management Strategy 2024 – 2027**
Appendix 4	**IDB1 2022/23**
Appendix 5	**Annual Governance Statement 2024**

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Notice of conclusion of the audit

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

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

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

2 The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of 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: P Burrows - Clerk to the Board

Date of Announcement: 8th September 2023

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

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

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 23/04/2023 27/04/2023 28/04/2023

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

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

Date: 28/04/2023

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

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	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:

11/04/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

C.1259

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

Chairman

Clerk

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending 31 March 2022 £	Year ending 31 March 2023 £	Notes and guidance: 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

Date 4th April 2023

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

11/04/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

C.1261

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

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

In respect of **March Fifth Drainage Commissioners – DB0049**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

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

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

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

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

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

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

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature	PKF Littlejohn LLP	Date	04/09/2023

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

BB/MM053
30 June 2023

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

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

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2022-2023

Having completed the internal audit work for the various Internal Drainage Boards administered by the Middle Level Commissioners officers for the year ended 31 March 2023, we are pleased to provide you with the following recommendations to be considered for implementation. We have included some general points and some points which are related to specific boards.

General points

1. **Asset Valuations and Insurances – mainly for residential properties**

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

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

Client comment:

While we have put it to Boards to review pumping station valuations for insurance purposes, as separate statutory authorities it is up to each Board to review and approve what they consider to be an appropriate valuation and your point concerning possible under-insured amounts having to be funded directly by the Board following an event has been highlighted previously. We are recommending that Boards should look to index link valuations and we will be asking all Boards again to consider this at subsequent meetings, along with consideration of current valuations. Valuation of residential property is an area we have focussed on for the 2023 meetings.

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

This is an area already programmed to be reviewed every five years and hopefully with indexing we may not require such individual valuations going forward.

2. Employee Benefits

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

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

Client comment:

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

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

3. Provisions

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

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

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

4. Budget figures

We note that budget figures are prepared annually in advance, but we note these are not updated in the late Autumn even when notable variances may have occurred for various factors. Whilst not necessary to do so for all boards, we suggest that Chairperson of each individual board be given the opportunity to request updated budgets after the half year point for the remainder of the year and distribute to board members if they feel it appropriate in light of any unforeseen significant variances arising.

The budgets that have been set for 2023/24 year may need to be increased throughout the year due to the significant cost increases that are largely as a result of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Client comment:

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

5. Surplus Funds

It is noted a number of IDB's hold significant cash reserves, with inflation having peaked at a 40 year high within the last 12 months, all IDB's need to consider investing their surplus funds, in order to achieve greater return on public funds and to ensure value for money principles are observed and cash asset values are not eroded overtime. We appreciate that in recent years interest rates would have made such an exercise unfruitful when taking into account the associated admin cost involved in such an undertaking. We note that some of IDBs decided to switch from the business premium bank account to business current bank account, these accounts no longer earn interest but are free from bank charges and fees. However, with the Bank of England now increasing interest rates to combat rising inflation in the UK, we would advise that this is now an opportune time to conduct such an exercise.

Client comment:

A brief summary of treasury management:

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

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

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

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

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

6. Rental of Land

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

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

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

7. Financial Regulations

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

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

Specific Points

Conington & Holme IDB

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

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

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

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

Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB – Joint Pumping Arrangement

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

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

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

We note that there have been discussions to potentially amalgamate the two boards, this would eradicate the anomaly. However, in the absence of this, we suggest that meetings and account preparation periods be brought into line, if possible, to eradicate this issue.

Client comment:

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

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

March East IDB

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

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

Hundred of Wisbech

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

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

Client comment:
Every effort is made to update the relevant pages of all authorities in an efficient and timely manner and in accordance with the regulations.

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

Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB

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

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

March 3rd IDB

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Administered by:

middle level commissioners

Governance

Risk Management Strategy 2024 - 2027

This document replaces the Board's 2020 risk management documentation and outlines how Members, officers/employees and the Middle Level Commissioners staff govern the Board's risks.

Risk Management Principles

The five key principles from the UK Government's 'Orange Book' shall be used in a proportionate manner, recognising Internal Drainage Boards as small public authorities with limited resources.

A. Risk management shall be an essential part of governance and leadership, and fundamental to how the organisation is directed, managed and controlled at all levels.
B. Risk management shall be an integral part of all organisational activities to support decision-making in achieving objectives.
C. Risk management shall be collaborative and informed by the best available information and expertise.
D. Risk management processes shall be structured.
E. Risk management shall be continually improved through learning and experience.

Risk Definition

A risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect the Board's ability to achieve its statutory responsibilities; remain viable and sustainable; deliver any wider objectives and; manage its reputation.

Risk is a function of the likelihood or probability of the event occurring versus the impact. A risk that materialises is no longer a risk, it is an issue.

Risk Categorisation

The Board will consider tactical risks and strategic risks that are within its control and/or influence to address.

Tactical risks will tend to be short term time horizon risks that are specific to the Board and within its control to address (ie it has the capacity, capability, finance, information, technology and responsibility).

Strategic risks will tend to be more generic to the local IDB community and potentially longer term in their time horizon. These are less likely to be within a single IDB's control to mitigate but will be within collective influence by IDBs working together and with other relevant authorities.

Risk (and Issue) Management Choices

The following four standard categories of risk response will be considered:

Terminate (heaviest strategy) - the risk will not be allowed to occur.
Treat - the risk may occur, but its impact or likelihood will be lessened through mitigating actions.
Transfer - the ownership of the risk will be formally moved to someone else not currently the risk. manager. *The new owner may decide to terminate, treat or tolerate the risk.*
Tolerate (Lightest strategy) - the risk will be allowed to occur with little to no mitigating action.

Risk Management Approach

These are the actions and approaches the Board will take to managing its risks through the period 2024-2027.

a) Receive papers and reports from MLC staff covering the topics Governance, Constitution & Membership, Finance, Environmental, Clerk's Report, Consulting Engineer (inc Operations, Capital Works and M&E) helping the Board identify and make choices around management of tactical and strategic risks.
b) Receive papers and reports from the Board's District Officer(s), Health & Safety rep and others as appropriate to help the Board identify and make choices around management of tactical risks.
c) Support the development and adoption of Key Health Indicators (KHIs) and Comparison Metrics across the portfolio of IDBs administered by MLC staff. These will be integrated into MLC staff authored papers and reports.
d) The Chairman & Vice Chairman will actively engage with the MLC & IDB Chairs community and MLC Senior Officers to identify and mitigate generic tactical and strategic risks that impact multiple IDBs.
e) Support the Middle Level Commissioners in managing its operational, environmental and asset management risks, including delivery of its capital programme, recognising the benefit to the IDBs within the MLC catchment.
f) Empower and recognise that the MLC Senior Officers and staff engage in wider relationships, partnerships and strategic projects on their behalf to help identify and mitigate generic tactical and strategic risks. This includes Fens 2100+ and the Fens Reservoir programmes.
g) Start to use language and terminology from this strategy at Board meetings within their consideration of risks.
h) Adopt formal project risk management as part of any capital works projects led by MLC staff on behalf of the Board.
i) Keep under review the need, benefit and cost of developing a formal risk assessment, risk register and risk response plan. It is currently not considered a proportionate approach.

Strategy published: January 2024

Internal Drainage Boards in England

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Annual Report for the year ended
31 March 2023

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

No later than 31 October 2023 a copy must be provided to:

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

Please complete the form electronically. If you are unable to complete the form electronically, please complete in BLOCK LETTERS using **black ink**.

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Section A – Financial information

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

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

Special levies information for financial year 2023-24 (forecast)	
Name of local authority	**2023-24 forecast £**
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	28,411
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	**28,411**

Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2023

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

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2023 £
INCOME		
1. Drainage Rates		3,337
2. Special Levies		25,829
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		1,299
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		(267)
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		4,626
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		
7. Loans		
8. Rechargeable Works		
9. Interest and Investment Income		3
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		200
11. Other Income		50
Total income		**35,077**
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		9,252
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		2,160
14. Watercourse maintenance		6,602
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		4,830
16. Administration		9,135
17. PSCAs		
18. Rechargeable Works		
19. Finance Charges		
20. SSSIs		
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		468
22. Other Expenditure		205
Total expenditure		**32,652**

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**2,425**
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		62,290
25. Grant income not applied in year		

Notes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

17. State all costs associated with the PSCA

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

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

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

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

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

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

24. Total balance of developer fund year end.

25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

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

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

Biodiversity

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

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

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

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

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)? 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?	12
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.	3
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	9
Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	2

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

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

Complaints procedure

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

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

Public Engagement

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

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

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

3.4%

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

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 2024, that:

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

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

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

and recorded as minute reference:

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

Chair

Clerk

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Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		12
Meeting:	**MARCH 5TH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK**	
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Robert Hill/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the Budgeting review within Appendix 1.
B. Note the Highland Water contributions
C. Consider and approve the payments detailed within Appendix 2.
D. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2023/2024 (Appendix 3).

Finance Officer's review and key messages

For 2023/2024 the Commissioners set a rate of 6.60p to raise a total of £31,921.12 in agricultural drainage rates and special levies. The rate setting process was centred around the new electricity contract and the uncertainty of the impact of a significant rainfall event. As members will be aware 2023/2024 became an ongoing rainfall event and the budget monitoring exercise carried out at the end of December forecast the out-turn being approximately £3,500 above the budgeted totals. Eventual savings against repairs and drain maintenance works limited the overspend to £1,426.

Claims for highland water contributions were submitted and paid in full by the Environment Agency.

The estimates against which the rate income was raised included the sum of £3,000 for future works and despite there being an overall overspend in the year this sum has been transferred in full.

Over-all this gives an increase in the Commissioners total fund balances of £2,075 in the year and this position is reflected in the Commissioners financial statements and Annual Return which they are requested to review and approve.

1. **Budgeting**

1.1 The budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2024 is included as Appendix 1.

2. Payments for 2023

2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 2

3. Highland Water Contributions

3.1 Under Section 57 of Land Drainage Act 1991 the Board can make a claim for funding to the Environment Agency for the additional costs of the onward management of water from the district's highland. It is at the Environment Agency's discretion if they pay the contribution and it is accounted for within the local team's annual maintenance budget.

Following the submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £111.61 (£1,671.22 less £1,559.61 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency for the financial year 2022/2023 based on the Commissioners' actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year and the sum of £1,594.53 in respect of 80% of the Commissioners' estimated expenditure for the financial year 2023/2024.

4. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2023/2024:

4.1 Annual Return 2023/2024:

To consider the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2024 and the completion of Section 2 of the Annual Return as required in the Audit Regulations. Appendix 3

Author Name: Robert Hill/Sam Ablett
Role: Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Budget Review
Appendix 2 Payments for 2023/24
Appendix 3 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2023/24

Appendix 1

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024

		Budget 2023/2024 £	Actual to 31.12.2023 £	Forecast to 31.03.2024 £	Remarks
1	Insurances	825	662	700	
2	Repairs and renewals	2,400	1,597	2,400	
3	Fuel (electricity)	3,000	5,587	8,000	- Electricity: ESTIMATED ONLY - see covering letter
4	Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	11,650	8,137	10,500	
5	District Officers' fees	930	0	930	
6	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising,	9,700	4,168	9,700	
7	Environment Agency - Precept	2,225	2,225	2,225	
8	Improvement works	3,000	2,250	3,000	
		33,730	24,626	37,455	
	LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Highland Water Contributions etc	1,809	1,978	2,078	
		31,920	22,647.04	35,376	

Appendix 2

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Payments 2023/2024 (1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024)

Tony Hopkin - District Officer's Fees for 2022-2023	870.00
Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & safety Re-charge 2022-2023	427.20
Middle Level Commissioners - Installation of telemetry at pumping stations (Net costs - 50% Grant Aided)	6,476.16
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Travelling	5,094.86
Middle Level Commissioners - Health & safety works at South Creek pumping station	329.23
Middle Level Commissioners - Court costs	0.50
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2022-23, production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,271.40
Association of Drainage Authorities - Annual Subscription 2023	716.40
Environment Agency - Precept	1,112.44
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	110.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	317.96
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	100.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	110.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Transfer of treated effluent discharge consent (A & K Fink)	2,507.36
A & K Fink - Refund of surface water discharge consent application	2,743.42
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	220.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit Fee (2022-2023 accounts)	252.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges and stationery	4,464.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	337.16
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2022/2023 accounts)	588.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	2,297.15
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	626.10
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	110.00
Environment Agency - Precept	1,112.43
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	110.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	206.82
B J Plant Hire Ltd. - Drain maintenance	2,322.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Chainsaw and removal of tree from drain at Foxglove Way	392.34
Middle Level Commissioners - Additional iInsurance premium after indexation of pumping stations	35.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Chemical weed control of District drains.	974.70
Harrison Agricultural - Flail mowing	3,571.20
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	337.16
Middle Level Commissioners - Preparation of highland water claims	111.17
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Conservation Officer)	492.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Culvert clearance at Flagrass	216.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	140.40
Information Commissioners - Data Protection Registration renewal	40.00
Middle Level Commisssioners - Pump checked due to report of high water level in drain	93.22
Association of Drainage Authorities (River Great Ouse branch) - Subscription 2023-2024	6.00
Tony Hopkin - District Officer's Fees for 2023-2024	932.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (North Creek pumping station)	697.88
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (South Creek pumping station)	850.25
Anglia Farmers - Electricity supply (North Creek pumping station)	240.29
Anglia Farmers - Electricity supply (South Creek pumping station)	877.96
	44,841.66

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

Appendix 3

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024
GENERAL FUND

2024				2023			
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year			Apr-01	Balance brought forward		33,499.27
	Precept		2,224.87	2024			
	Insurances	661.60		Mar-31	Rate income & Special levy	31,910.44	
	Repairs & Renewals	1,984.50			Interest on Deposit Accounts	279.76	
	Fuel	7,269.31			Rent	200.00	
	Drainworks	10,835.84			Consent	0.00	
	Administration charge, Audit fee,				Highland Water contributions	1,613.50	
	printing, stationery, advertising etc	9,565.62	30,316.87		Development a/c - Maintenance	0.00	34,003.70
	Future Works Fund		3,000.00				
	Balance carried forward		32,054.73		Write Back of provisions		93.50
			67,596.47				67,596.47

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	32,054.73	Ratepayers Account - Arrears	220.77
Development Charges Account	62,810.54	Rent Account - Arrears	0.00
Sundry Creditors	14,153.65	Defra Grant-in-Aid	1,942.92
Future Works Fund	3,000.00	Sundry Debtors	5.64
		Value added Tax - Refunds due	1,989.29
		Balance in hand - Treasurer's Accounts	107,860.30
	921,018.92		921,018.92

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024
DEVELOPMENT CHARGES ACCOUNT

2024				2023			
Mar-31	Middle Level Commissioners-Fees	0.00		Apr-01	Balance brought forward		62,290.35
	General Fund - Fees - Estover/Berryfields	0.00					
	General Fund - Maintenace	0.00	0.00	2024			
				Mar-31			
					Clerk's Collection Account	0.00	
					Interest	520.19	520.19
	Balance carried forward		62,810.54		Write back of provisions		0.00
			62,810.54				62,810.54

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2024

Barclays - Treasurers Account 2023/2024

1st April 2023			31st March 2024		
Balance brought forward		109,053.88	Payments made during the year	44,841.66	
31st March 2024			Transfers	0.00	
Receipts during the year					44,841.66
Clerk's collection account	39,812.01				
Interest on deposit accounts	796.95	40,608.96			
			Balance carried forward		104,821.18
		149,662.84			**149,662.84**

National Savings - Treasurers Account 2023/2024

1st April 2023		31st March 2024	
Balance brought forward	3,036.12	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2024			
Interest on deposit accounts	3.00	Balance carried forward	3,039.12
	3,039.12		**3,039.12**

Barclays Bank PLc

Current Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2024	20,000.00
Less unpresented cheques	932.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	19,068.00

Cash balances as at 31st March 2024

Barclays Bank PLc

Current Account	**19,068.00**
Business Premium Account	**85,753.18**

National Savings

Investment Account per passbook	**3,039.12**
Total reconciled cash balances per accounts	**107,860.30**

March Fifth DDC
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2024

				Per Annual Return
Line 1	**Balances brought forward**			
	General Fund	33,499.27		
	Development charges account	62,290.35		
			95,789.62	**95,790**
Line 2	**Rates and Special Levies**			
	Agricultural rates	3,510.13		
	Special Levies	28,411.00		
	Penalty	8.21		
	Costs	0.00		
	Write-off	-18.90		
			31,910.44	**31,910**
Line 3	**Total other receipts**			
	Interest			
	General fund	279.76		
	Development charges account	520.19		
	Rent	200.00		
	Highland Water	1,613.50		
	Consents	0.00		
	Discharge contribution	0.00		
	Write back of provisions	93.50		
			2,706.95	**2,707**
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	2,224.87		
	Rates, insurances, telephones	661.60		
	Repairs and renewals	1,984.50		
	Fuel	7,269.31		
	Drainworks	10,835.84		
	Administration	9,565.62		
	Development charges fees	0.00		
			32,541.74	**32,542**
Line 7	**Balances carried forward**			
	General Fund	32,054.73		
	Development charges account	62,810.54		
	Future works account	3,000.00		
			97,865.27	**97,865**
	Reconciliation			
	Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6		97,865.27	

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	*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	93,365	95,790	*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	29,166	31,910	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	5,910	2,707	*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	32,651	32,542	*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	95,790	97,865	*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	112,090	107,860	*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 exclude any Trust transactions.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

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

Date 04/04/2024

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

as recorded in minute reference:

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

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		13
Meeting:	**MARCH 5TH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD**	
Date:	**Tuesday 9th April 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Robert Hill/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider the Finance Officer's summary
B. Fees, remuneration and subscriptions
C. Review & approve Determination of land for rating purposes & Rate arrears (Confidential papers)
D. Note the Precept to the Environment Agency
E. Review & Approve Rating Estimates for 2024/2025
F. Consider & approve the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2024/2025

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

The rating estimates for 2024/2025 are influenced by two factors, the provisions for drain maintenance works and pumping.

The engineers estimate for drain maintenance works in 2024/2025 are £12,360, an increase of £3,660 on the previous year's estimate.

Estimates for pumping costs are as problematical as last year in that we need to factor in an 'average' pumping year, taking-into-account the impact of climate change. Further, we will have a new electricity supply contract from October 2024 with no current indications of possible unit costs. The provision is therefore an estimate of pumping volumes at an estimate of possible new contract rates. Members should therefore consider if they think the provision is reasonable when setting the rate.

The estimates contain general provisions for routine expenditure and the £3,000 provision for future works. Members should consider the engineers comments concerning the capital improvement programme and if this provision is currently sufficient. The estimated expenditure gives a rate requirement of 7.40p.

1. Fees, Renumerations and Subscriptions

1.1 RE DISTRICT OFFICER WAGES/FEES

1.2 Subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) will increase by 6%, from £597 to £636 for 2024.

2. Precept to the Environment Agency

2.1 Internal Drainage Boards are required to pay a Precept (IDB Precept) to the Environment Agency for their expenses managing water passing into main rivers. Predominantly, the Precept funds additional maintenance downstream of and/or benefitting IDB districts.

2.2 The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 3% for 2024.

The precept for 2022/2023 was £2161.00.

3. Determination of land for rating purposes and rate arrears – Confidential papers

4. Estimates for 2024/25

4.1 The estimated budget for 2024/25 is shown in Appendix 1.

4.3 The Board are reminded that it is standard practice to budget for an average year in terms of rainfall and associated pumping requirements.

5. Rate Requirements for 2024/25

5.1 Appendix 2 details the rate requirement that needs to be set and approved by the Board in order to raise sufficient rate and special levy income to cover the budget estimate.

5.2 Board Members are welcome to propose alternative rate requirements and invite these for consideration by the Board along with their supporting rationale and proposed mechanism for catering within the budget estimate and/or the Board's investment strategy.

Author Name: Robert Hill/Sam Ablett
Role: Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

Enclosure 1 **Determination of Land Values for Rating (CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS)**
Rate Arrears (CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS)

Appendix 1 **Estimates for 2024/25**
Appendix 2 **Rate Requirements for 2024/25**

Appendix 1

MARCH FIFTH DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET 2024/2025

		Budget 2023/2024 £	Actual 2023/2024 £	Budget 2024/2025 £
1	Insurances	825	662	725 [A]
2	Repairs and renewals	2,400	1,985	2,500
3	Fuel (electricity)	3,000	7,269 [B]	4,375 [C]
4	Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	11,650	9,904	15,800 [D]
5	District Officers' fees	930	932	1,000
6	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising,	9,700	9,566	10,100
7	Environment Agency - Precept	2,225	2,225	2,292
8	Improvement works	3,000 [E]	3,000 [E]	3,000 [E]
		33,730	35,542	39,792
	LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Highland Water Contributions etc	1,809	2,187	3,615 [F]
		31,920	33,355	36,177

Remarks

- A - Includes estimate for increased premiums
- B - Usage to end of year estimated from meter reads
- C - Provision based on high rainfall event at new contract rates from October (unknown)
- D - Includes engineer's items 12,360
- E - Provision for future works System Study costs assumed to be funded from Grant-in-aid allocation
- F - Includes full highland water contribution based on estimates 3,303

Appendix 2

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 2024/2025 is:-

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 10.85%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to Fenland District Council – 89.15%.

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £531.

In 2024/2025 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £4,889

Revenue cash balance in hand reduced by £1,444 in 2023/2024 to - £32,055.

The estimated net expenditure for revenue and capital works of £36,177 in 2024/2025 is equivalent to:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 7.40p and

b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £32,251

In 2023/2024 a rate of 6.60p in the £ was raised together with a Special levy of £28,411 on Fenland District Council.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Commissioners

April 2024