RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY
INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley IDB
Held at the Old Nene Golf Club on 9th January 2025

PRESENT

R Blackhurst (acting Chair)	S Corney (HDC)
T Bedford	J Edwards
A Butler	M Lambert
L Butler	A Wagstaffe
J Clarke	

Paul Burrows the Clerk and Chris Bailey representing the consulting engineer were in attendance. In the Chairman's absence, R Blackhurst (Vice Chairman) led the meeting and welcomed P Burrows and C Bailey to the meeting in their roles as Chief Executive and Head of Technical Services at the Middle Level Commissioners. He also thanked members for attending given the critical matters to be discussed.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from S Bedford, S Cornwell, M Mckenna, Andrew Roberts & C Wilkinson.

B.1437 Declarations of Interest

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

No new or specific interests were declared.

B.1438 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 4th May 2024. are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

J Clarke asked about whether the Board has insurance cover in the event of prosecution for environmental damage. P Burrows outlined that there was public liability and professional indemnity cover in place, but that no insurance would cover a body or person in the event they broke the law. He added that if there are specific questions regarding cover then Sam Ablett deals with the group policy that is in place for MLC and all its administered IDBs.

P Burrows gave an update on the Tesco Pumped Outfall correcting the previous minutes in that the debt was with a new debt management firm who now have the correct contact at Tesco and we hope will make progress. C Bailey added that the discharge consent fee had not be paid and this is the debt being sought, once this has been paid then the consent can be duly made as at the moment the discharge is unconsented. He added that once these steps are in place then the Board can undertake a compliance review and consider the adequacy and performance of the solution given the changes in the intervening period.

B.1439 Constitution & Membership
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**4**
Meeting:	**RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY IDB**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Thursday 9th January 2025**	**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. Reinforce 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	12	N/A		6
Actual	12	2 HDC	14	
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	Stuart Bedford	Ratepayer	
2	Thomas Bedford	Ratepayer	
3	Richard Blackhurst	Ratepayer	Vice-Chair
4	Ashley Butler	Nominee of Ratepayer (J&H Edwards)	
5	Stuart Cornwell	Ratepayer	
6	Jason Edwards	Ratepayer	
7	Michael Lambert	Ratepayer	
8	Mike Mckenna	Nominee of Ratepayer (AG Reserves)	
9	Andrew Roberts	Nominee of Ratepayer (D C Roberts)	Chairman
10	Andrew Wagstaffe	Ratepayer	
11	Christopher Wilkinson	Ratepayer	
12	Leo Butler	Nominee of Ratepayer (J&H Edwards)	District Officer

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	J Clarke	HDC	Councillor
2	S Corney	HDC	Councillor
3			

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	08/05/2024	04/01/2024	11/5/2023	05/1/2023
1	Stuart Bedford	Present	Present	Attended	attended
2	Thomas Bedford	Apologies	Apologies	apologies	attended
3	Richard Blackhurst	Apologies	present	attended	apologies
4	Ashley Butler	Apologies	Present	apologies	attended
5	Stuart Cornwell	Present	Present	attended	
6	Jason Edwards	Present	Present	attended	attended
7	Michael Lambert	Apologies	Apologies		attended
8	Mike Mckenna	Present	Present	n/a	n/a
9	Andrew Roberts	Present	Apologies	attended	attended
10	Andrew Wagstaffe	Apologies	Present	attended	attended
11	Christopher Wilkinson	Apologies	Present	attended	attended
12	Leo Butler	Present	Present	attended	attended

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/12/2024	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022
1	Andrew Roberts	Present	apologies	attended	

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	08/05/2024	04/01/2024	11/5/2023	5/1/2023
1	J Clarke (HDC)	Present	Apologies	apologies	attended
2	S Corney (HDC)	Apologies	Present		attended
3					

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 Next Election of the Board will be 2026.

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 1 of 14 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 3 of 14 Board members have reported viewing 2 of the 5 videos.
To date 2 of 14 Board members have reported viewing 3 of the 5 videos.

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

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

Author Name: Polly Tombleson
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

The Board considered the report and P Burrows highlighted an important upcoming shift in income balance that ought to be given consideration by the Board. He outlined that ongoing development would likely tip the balance of the Board's rateable area. He added that currently the area was approximately 50.2% agricultural and 49.8% non-agricultural with this component being funded by Special Levy from Hunts District Council who raise this on the Board's behalf via Council Tax. He added that 1-2ha of development would likely trigger a shift in majority.

He added that whilst HDC currently appoint 2 members they are eligible to appoint 12 and with any shift they could appoint a majority of 13 members. These would be a large Board for the scale of risk and level of income/expenditure.

J Clarke added that HDC have limited people to appoint to IDBs. S Corney added that there was also Local Government reform to consider and the likelihood of Cambridgeshire moving towards Unitary Authorities. A Wagstaff added that HDC could appoint farmers to the Board and P Burrows confirmed that they have the option to appoint anyone of good standing and local knowledge.

R Blackhurst enquired as to whether there was a way to avoid the shift. J Clarke and P Burrows added that the rules are set and woven into base IDB legislation. J Clarke suggested there may be a need to consider amalgamation with a neighbouring rural Board. P Burrows added that this would be the only way to maintain an agricultural dominance and it would help IDBs reduce the risk associated with political and local government change.

R Blackhurst concluded that there may be a longer-term vison here to develop, even if we may not want this approach now.

B.1440 Clerk's Report
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	CLERK'S REPORT
Date:	Thursday 9th January 2025	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

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

1. MLC Services to IDBs

We have made the business decision to focus our clerking and technical services offer to IDBs within the Middle Level where there is water management connectivity with the Middle Level Commissioners' catchment.

The continued service offer to IDBs is contingent on their open-mindedness, support and leadership within the reform/amalgamation agenda, as this is needed to create a more sustainable medium- long term business model between the MLC and IDBs. It also contingent on IDBs taking active decisions to manage their risks appropriately to sustain and/or improve their health.

Therefore, the following eight IDBs have been provided with notice that our service offer will be discontinued:

- Bluntisham IDB
- Over & Willingham IDB
- Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners
- Swavesey IDB
- Hundred Foot Washes IDB
- Hundred of Wisbech IDB
- Waldersey IDB
- Feldale IDB (administered by the Whittlesey Consortium of IDBs)

This covers all the services offered by MLC, i.e. clerking (admin, governance and finance), environment, M&E, planning & consenting, operations, survey, GIS and capital works.

The 'consultancy agreement' for clerkship services between the MLC and each IDB requires no less than 6-months' notice by either party expiring on 31st March in any year. Therefore, notice must be given by the end of September in any year. To provide each IDB with sufficient time to source alternative suppliers and to enable us to work with those suppliers and the IDB on a transition plan, the termination of services will come into force on 1st April 2026 at the latest. We will however conclude the year-end accounts and annual returns for 2025/26 which happens after 1st April 2026.

It is likely that there will be certain activities or pieces of work that may need to be continued beyond this date until a suitable milestone is reached. This will be agreed as part of a transition plan and a bespoke fee arrangement will be agreed for each of these.

Our service offer to Sutton & Mepal IDB and Manea & Welney DDC will continue given:

- The Old Bedford River interrelationship and potential future amalgamation with Upwell IDB.
- The Fens Reservoir proposal and Cranbrook/Counterdrain strategy may change the water management connectivity between these districts and the Middle Level Commissioners' system.

We are in discussion with Ramsey IDB with a view to taking on their clerkship.

We are refocussing because:

- There has been significant incremental change over the last 10-20 years in terms of IDB governance standards, financial requirements, health & safety, and environmental legislation.
- The scale of M&E and capital works is increasing as a generation of assets deteriorate and come to the end of their reliable life.
- Development pressures and the squeeze on Byelaws have intensified over the last 15 years.
- There is now much more of a need than in the past to work in partnership with a wider range of bodies across an increasingly diversifying suite of agendas.
- The active member inputs around many IDBs have reduced given the changes in farming and age demographic and some Boards are now struggling for attendance.
- The scale of strategic issues facing the Middle Level catchment has and will continue to increase exponentially and will require more focussed working with a broader range of partners locally, regionally and nationally than ever before (e.g. scale and impact of development, pressure on water resources, Fens Reservoir, scale of MLC capital works, impact of climate change on our system, lowland peat, environmental enhancement).
- We are not exploiting the opportunity to maximise sources of income beyond the drainage rate and special levy funding base.

All of the above means that MLC staffing resource is currently spread far too thinly and has been for some time. We consider that the organisation broadly has the staff capacity to provide a good level of service for the Middle Level Commissioners' responsibilities alone. Many staff are working well beyond their contracted hours to provide as good a service as possible for the MLC and the IDBs we currently have a service provision relationship with.

This all means that our service provision to IDBs is now having a direct impact on the delivery of the Middle Level Commissioners' responsibilities, therefore increasing their risks, liabilities and costs. The quality of service provided to all IDBs is also not where we feel it needs to be, which affects all IDBs.

The shorter-term measures to mitigate this are:

- Focussing our service provision
- Creating a new MLC Service Catalogue, including a review of fee arrangements, targeted improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.
- Introducing Key Health Indicators to better enable IDBs to manage their risks and enable comparison across the Middle Level.
- Targeted increase of staff capacity and use of 'bought in service'.
- Developing a 'case for change' in terms of IDB reform/amalgamation across the Middle Level (this needs resourcing).
- Ongoing amalgamation of March East & Euximoor IDBs and reconstitutions of Conington & Holme IDB and Warboys, Somersham & Pidley IDB.

The medium-term measures to mitigate this are:

- IDB reform/amalgamation across the Middle Level, including a review of the business model between the MLC and IDBs.

- Increasing and diversifying income, including a review of our charges associated with planning and consenting.

In terms of developing a new catalogue and associated fee structure, this is underway but not yet as developed as hoped given workload challenges. New staff are also bringing a new perspective to this. There are a few significant gaps in service provision emerging that need to be explored with the IDBs and would require resourcing (finance and people) and training. These include:

- Consent compliance
- Enforcement (inc complex cases and legacy issues)
- Major development and sites of concern (inc, multi-agency working)
- Authorisations and powers of entry
- Proactively formalising land registry, easements and agreements
- Communications and engagement

To ensure no conflict of interests within our service provision to IDBs, we will not undertake private work for ratepayers, landowners, developers, or any prospective consent applicant. It is particularly important that ratepayers' and Board Members understand and respect this position within any works they plan or are involved in that may need consent from the IDB or MLC. This will support Board Members in managing their own conflict of interest and within their code of conduct. There may be exceptions to this that will need to be reviewed and agreed between the MLC Chief Executive/Clerk and IDB Chairman.

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

As previously reported to the MLC Board and IDBs, 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.

The consensus from those who attended was that we needed to act and a small working group was identified to draft an initial case for change. The working group met on 5th September 2024 and were joined by Innes Thomson, ADA Chief Executive. The group used the 'Geoff Beel' vision from 2009 as a starting point to discuss the primary drivers for change and the key concerns that any proposed new model would need to take account of.

A summary of the discussion:

- Change is not new within the Middle Level and there has been ongoing evolution of IDBs.
- We need to locally design and drive future change, proactively taking control of our own collective future. IDBs are the decision makers.
- We need to agree what we need to look like in 5-15 years to be sustainable and efficient for the subsequent 25 years.
- Do Nothing and Do Minimum (continued incremental change) are not considered as options as amongst other risks they increase the likelihood of reform being directed upon us.
- The scope is to develop options and then identify a preferred option for the future IDB model of IDBs within the Middle Level catchment ie where we have two tiers of land drainage.
- Similar discussions are happening elsewhere and currently the new government is in supportive and listening mode. We need to develop our approach very much with the Minister (plus Defra and Environment Agency) not for the Minister.
- We risk becoming more of an anomaly if other IDB landscapes drive reform and we do not.

- Amalgamating IDBs into the Middle Level Commissioners or becoming one very large two tier IDB has been ruled out and will not be recommended to the MLC Board (see below for rationale).
- We think options for one, two, three, four and maybe five IDBs need to be developed to an outline design stage. The management and operational delivery model may change for each of these.
- Any preferred option would need to ensure and ideally enhance value for money and make sense from a business point of view.
- Private Districts are an added complexity that ought to be considered within a detailed design phase, once a core IDB preferred option has been determined.
- There is a recognition that additional resources are needed to develop and deliver a case for change. IDBs will need to make a provision/contribution for this and in doing so increase the likelihood of securing funding from others. Seed funding to get us moving is needed ahead of asking 24 IDBs for funds.
- There is a recognition that implementation of a preferred option would need to be resourced, managed and led as a change programme.

The Middle Level Commissioners, whilst having the responsibilities and functions of an Internal Drainage Board under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and Floods & Water Management Act 2010, have functions and responsibilities beyond a 'normal' IDB that are specified and catered for within a suite of primary legislation, predominantly the Middle Level Acts.

Amalgamating 24 IDBs into the Middle Level Commissioners would likely need new primary legislation and similarly becoming one large two tier Middle Level IDB (solely acting under the Land Drainage Act) would mean repealing a suite of primary legislation. Both approaches would be significantly more complex, costly time-consuming and controversial than recent experience with the Middle Level Act (2018) that introduced navigation licensing.

Repealing the Middle Level Acts and becoming a Middle Level IDB would mean new legislation and a new body would be needed to take over the MLC's navigation authority role (or the Environment Agency subsume these) and potentially our water transfer role. This would add unwelcomed additional complexity to water level management within the Middle Level given how the system and infrastructure serves and balances a variety of interests and is likely to be largely unsupported by many of beneficiaries of our system.

The next steps identified:

- Paul Burrows and Innes Thomson to pitch for seed funding from the Environment Agency's Fens2100+ programme. Paul Burrows to ask the MLC Board to consider a financial contribution at their meeting on 7th November 2024.
- MLC to then act as lead client bringing in local knowledgeable extra hands to develop the scoping and outline design. A scope for this will need to be developed.
- The ambition would be to present outline design options via IDB 2025 meetings. This ambition is subject to funding, resources and not having an exceptionally wet winter to contend with again.
- Working Group to meet again in January 2025 (dependent upon the above).

3. Electricity

3.1 Electricity Service

In terms of standing charge policy, our appearance on BBC Countryfile has contributed to ofgem consulting on a revised approach. They have no definite timescales as yet unfortunately but have reiterated that IDBs remain an important case study for them and one they will continue to raise with decision-makers within government.

A group made up of nominated IDB Chairs along with the MLC Chairman and Vice Chair reviewed the electricity contract. Having reviewed options, it was agreed by all to enter into a 12 month fully fixed, 100% renewable power electricity contract with EDF Energy, together with a service level agreement with Green Energy Advice Bureau (GEAB), who will manage the contract and validate invoices.

New Unit Rates are within the range of 21-29p. Following the last TCR in 2023/2024 the annual standing charges amounted to £155,662.32, these now stand at £130,467.61 before adding St. Germans, which at present equates to £49,122.50, being a total of £179,590.11, an annual increase of £23,927.79 across the portfolio. The St. Germans quote does not include the Targeted Charging Review (TCR) charges, which is not down to GEAB nor EDF, but a supplier wide decision due to the EH1V type of meter, which means suppliers will charge the TCR as they are charged from the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

We have been advised that the standing charges will continue to increase due to the TCR charges as these are going up year on year. The DUoS (Distribution) and TNUoS (Transmition) charges are set each year, and this is the distribution and transportations costs and will be affected by such things as oil prices and demand for dealing with Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) shipments.

4. Charging for Planning & Consenting

As previously reported, we have for a long time been reactive and had insufficient resources to cater for the amount and range of planning and consenting workload for the Commissioners and IDBs with an inability to step back and identify and implement improvements. Our reputation has suffered, and we receive regular complaints.

With new leadership capacity and capability within Technical Services, we are now in a healthier position to identify and drive improvements. A key foundation of improvement is a review and implementation of our charging approach for developers and consent applicants. We have identified that we are significantly out of sync with neighbours and have likely been missing out on substantial income over many years. This is income that could in part be reinvested into developing our capacity and capability to improve our service, as well as contributing to asset improvement budgets.

The Board is asked to support the need to review our charging model to maximise income. The intent is to present a proposal to the MLC Board for approval in April 2025 with subsequent approval being sought by the IDBs thereafter.

5. Highland Water & IDB Precept.

On 18th October 2024 we were informed that the Environment Agency has insufficient sufficient budget to cover all the IDB Highland Water Claims. Their intent is to make payment capped to their budget and then bring IDBs from within the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) area together in November 2024 to review options. The Anglian (Northern) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee has provided Lincolnshire IDBs with reassurance that the shortfall will be met, even if from the RFCC's local levy funding. At their meeting on 17th October 2024, the Anglian (Great Ouse) RFCC also voted on a 2% increase in IDB Precept for the year 2025/26.

If relevant to the specific IDB, the Board is asked to delegate the decision to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman on whether to appeal under (s57 (4) of the Land Drainage Act) any reduced or non-payment of its Highland Water Claims. The Board is asked to support the

packaging any such appeal with similar appeals from MLC administered IDBs and potentially IDBs from the wider Gt Ouse catchment. Any appeal must be lodged within 6-weeks of formal notification.

The Board is asked to delegate the decision on whether to appeal the IDB Precept (under s40 of the Water Resources Act) to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman. Any appeal must be lodged within 6-weeks of formal notification.

6. Rating

As previously reported the Water Management Alliance's (WMA) support for their rating software (DRS2005) which we use to manage and issue circa 4000 drainage rates on behalf of the Commissioners and administered IDBs will be discontinued on 31 March 2025. ADA subsequently decided not to lead on the redevelopment of DRS.

The WMA have re-written DRS for their members IDBs in Access 365, which will be made available for other IDBs to use under licence. This software is known as DRS365 and runs on their Terminal Server, which will be securely operated, maintained and supported remotely.

Upgrading to DRS 365 (the software licence, training and transitioning work) will cost circa £10k per site (ie covering MLC and our administered IDBs) and the annual support charge will be circa £5k per site. This covers their costs and provides a more robust, sustainable and better supported system than we currently have, reducing risk to MLC and our administered IDBs. These costs will be reviewed next on 1 April 2025 and annually thereafter. The existing DRS2005 maintenance fee is £1k per annum.

The only other options we have would be to create our own software (which is impractical) or revert to a paper-based system (which would be a retrograde and resource intensive step). In these circumstances the WMA would offer a year extension to the DRS2005, hosted on their server, but at our risk should Microsoft decide to turn off the Access 2003 platform upon which the existing DRS is dependent.

7. Debt Management

Having had limited success with previous bailiffs, we are trialling a new approach to debt management. We have issued a suite of legacy drainage rate and developer charges debt held by the Commissioners and some IDBs to Glenwood debt management company. They operate on a no win no fee basis, and if they prove successful there is opportunity to issue them cases much earlier on in the process, at non-payment stage. This could be significantly more efficient in terms of staff time and hopefully more effective.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

The Board considered the report and its content. P Burrows drew the Boards attention to the work that has been commissioned looking at potential IDB reform that builds on the earlier discussion. He added that a draft report was being reviewed by a working group soon with engagement with IDBs following on from this.

He then outlined the work ongoing to review our charging model for planning and consenting. R Blackhurst said that the Board was supportive and encouraged that the Middle Level Commissioners also recognised the concerns with the performance of Sustainable Drainage systems installed by developers. J Clarke added that more prompt response to planning was essential. C Bailey added that a key part of the improvement work was developing the strategic relationships with Planning Authorities and introducing standing advice. He added that we are moving forward and have dealt with much of the backlog.

P Burrows outline the latest position with Highland Water and the high likelihood that the Environment Agency will not meet full claims this year with the prognosis for a greater shortfall in 2025/26 onwards. He added that this Board had been slightly insulated from the shortfall, given that the Environment Agency were still making 100% payments for works on catchwaters. J Clarke added that the Board were just contractors for their catchwater. P Burrows said that this is not the case, the catchwater is a watercourse vested in the IDB like their others, but the agreement is that it is eligible for 100% funding under the Highland Water arrangements.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

> Delegated that the clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman, to decide whether or not to appeal under s57 (4) of the Land Drainage Act on behalf of the Board any reduced or non-payment of its Highland Water Claims and associated packaging of any appeal with the MLC and other IDBs.
>
> Delegated that the clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman, to decide on whether to appeal the IDB Precept under s40 of the Water Resources Act.

B.1441 Environment Officers' Report

P Burrows outlined that the Chairman had joined a Chairmans' session for all MLC administered IDBs before Christmas where Sofi Lloyd, the Ecological & Environmental Services Manager, had provided a verbal update on the work that had taken place over recent months to improve the management of the collective environmental risk of the MLC and local IDBs.

He also reported that within this session the minimum service required for an IDB to be compliant and manage their environmental risk had been defined and equates to 6.25 days' worth of specialist time that is reliant and contingent upon inputs and call-down from IDB Board Members. He added that this will be packaged and communicated to Boards in the coming weeks and would represent a step-change in expenditure for the Board. He added that this year is a small step towards this in terms of fee, but the uncomfortable truth is that for too long there essentially has been a token gesture contribution which is now significantly out of step with statutory requirements, and it is not appropriate for the Middle Level Commissioners to continue to underwrite the management of other IDB's environmental risks.

B.1442 Chairman's Items

R Blackhurst reported that the Chairman's has clarified that the Board will be leading and overseeing the continued work to address the slip on their catchwater drain.

B.1443 Consulting Engineers' Reports
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	**RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME**
Date:	**Thursday 9th January 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Nicola Oldfield**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. **Acknowledge the proposed approach to introduce interim charges for responding to applicant's questions.**

B. **Confirm whether it wishes to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.**

C. **Decide how to proceed in light of GiA funding uncertainty, consider how it will fund future capital improvement works and develop an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement.**

1. Technical Services

1.1 Since Chris Bailey started as our new Head of Technical Services, we have been updating the catalogue of services which the MLC could provide. Given the increasing frequency of complex cases where Boards consider there may be a need for regulation and enforcement dependant on the costs and benefits, we are reviewing and updating training, policies, and capacity to undertake enforcement and compliance regulation on behalf of the Boards we represent.

1.2 We are receiving an increased number of questions from developers ahead of planning applications/consent applications, with an expectation that we can provide the information freely. Until we have completed the review of our charging model, we will be introducing interim charges for answering these questions if applicants do not enter into a pre-app agreement. There is already provision for this within our existing charging structure.

The Board is asked to acknowledge this approach.

2 Summary of Key Planning Issues

We will, when possible, seek the Board's input, rather than wait for Board meetings. This will be done via correspondence with the Chair, Vice Chair/District Officer and any appropriate sub-committees.

2.1 ***Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - Open consultation***

Following the change of government in July an open consultation was held between 30th July and 24th September 2024 on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system.

As the NPPF sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, it is therefore a significant driver and influence on development related planning policy, and it was essential that a suitable response be made.

During August the Boards' Chairs were given the opportunity to comment on the issues raised within the draft consultation document and provide comments and any other related items of unease that the Boards had.

A response, which was primarily providing answers to specific questions, was submitted before the deadline.

One of the big issues related to development of the "green belt" and the introduction of the "grey belt" but the consultation also included decision making, climate change, flood risk, and environmental related issues. Responses to specific questions contained within the consultation included:

1. The advantages and disadvantages of restoring the 5-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS).

2. Further supporting effective co-operation on cross boundary and strategic planning matters.

3. The LPA's need to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development on their special levy and future funding requests under Defra's Partnership Funding Policy. Under this policy housing built or converted after January 2012 is **not** included in FCERM government grant in aid calculations.

4. The need to consider the adoption of appropriate measures that consider the whole water cycle process such as rainwater harvesting and the re-use of as much water as possible.

5. The need for bodies involved in the planning process but which are not LPAs to be provided with suitable compensation, benefit and other incentives for contributing to and enabling the aspirational growth and local economy.

The opportunity was taken to raise some issues not covered by the reform consultation as a concern by many Boards, in the hope that these points are heard and acted upon. These included:

A. The Fenland Situation – special requirements needed due to the low-lying topography, the managed flood risk and land drainage systems, the provision of enabling infrastructure to allow life to continue and also accommodate current growth aspirations.

B. The flawed methodology used by LPAs and poor decisions made by the LPAs when considering and allocating sites often caused by the need to meet government targets.

C. The impacts of growth and climate change and the need to revise nationally accepted design standards.

It is understood that several thousand responses to the consultation were submitted and, therefore, the implementation of the reforms may be delayed accordingly.

2.2 *New developments and the use of SuDS*

Analysis of the responses from the last round of meetings revealed that the Board and its members had overwhelming concerns about the uses of SuDS Devices from the design, construction, ownership, management and maintenance phases.

Despite the new government growth agenda, as partly discussed above, it appears unlikely that the previously announced implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act and the introduction of the SuDS Approval Board (SAB) will occur in the near future.

2.3 ***MLC001: Middle Level System Flood & Drainage Infrastructure Capacity***

This is directly relevant to the Boards that drain and/or pump into the MLC system and will be of interest to others.

As you will be aware, 2023/24 broke records for rainfall and the amount of water pumped at St Germans. Over 227,000 million litres of water were safely pumped into the Tidal Great Ouse that would have otherwise been flooding homes, land, businesses, roads and other critical infrastructure, significantly affecting other vital public services.

Our station worked in combination with over 70 smaller Internal Drainage Board stations, hundreds of kilometres of drains and raised embankments, to keep our Fens relatively dry and protect local communities and the economy from flooding. We are hoping for a drier 2024/25 but need to plan for this being the new normal. This winter really helped highlight the importance of, and also the weaknesses, in our infrastructure and operations.

Alongside this, and within the constraints of our limited staff capacity, we are improving how we engage as non-statutory consultees in the planning process. We want to provide planning authorities, developers and others with an earlier, much clearer stance from us, to inform plans strategically (e.g. within Local Plan development) and tactically (e.g. within individual planning applications).

With these factors in mind, we have published our first 'standing advice note' which is included as Appendix 3 and is available on our website https://middlelevel.gov.uk/standing-advice-2/. Standing Advice Note MLC001 effectively declares our flood and drainage infrastructure 'at capacity'. The intent is to develop and publish further notes over the coming months.

This note was issued to local Councils and the Environment Agency on Wednesday 8th May 2024 for them to consider within their decision making. Boards will need to appreciate and plan for the limitations within the MLC receiving system within their own pumping station improvement schemes.

Boards may choose to create, adopt and issue similar standing advice notes for their districts.

The Board is asked to confirm whether it wishes to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

NB – The following entries provide an update since the November 2023 Meeting Report.

2.4 *Mixed use development on land opposite Viscount Garage, St Mary's Road – Abbey Properties Cambridge Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 210, 225 & 278); Client of Amazi Consulting Ltd (MLC Ref No 300); MJS Construction (March) Ltd (MLC Ref No 359); Greystoke Land (MLC Ref Nos 278, 300, 354, 357, 359, 402 & 403) & Galliard Homes (MLC Ref No 416)*

Following last January's meeting a complaint was received from CJ O'Shea and Company Limited which it submitted reluctantly "... due to the time it is taking for an approval of our surface water scheme."

A response issued at the end of January provided an update on the position following the Board Meeting together with comments on the Site Layout; Consent applications; Enhancement of the Boards system; Long term ownership, maintenance, and funding of the water management system.

The proposed surface water system was the subject of an independent review by an external consultant which raised several issues.

The review was one of the items of discussion at a meeting held in early February attended by relevant parties including the Boards Chair and District Officer together with the Planning Engineer.

Also at this meeting:

1. The developer explained that initially the estate roads would be installed together with the drainage for the roads with the individual plots being developed on an individual basis at a later date.

   Concern was expressed at this approach given that the Business Park may take several years to complete and may lead to the other developers not consulting with the Board.

2. The Boards Chair expressed several concerns about the surface water design, the use of SuDS & payment of the Contribution Fee/Other Compensation.

   Being similar to those expressed by members of other Boards the Chairs comments were noted and formed the basis of entry that was included in subsequent Board Meetings, including this Boards May Meeting, requesting members comments. The results are summarised in item 2.5.1 *New developments and the use of SuDS* in this report.

Following the meeting an e-mail concerning the Boards position was issued. This included:

A. A brief resume of Board Meeting entries, Minutes and other salient points between January 2010 and February 2024.

   The resume referred to the response made to the District Council when preparing its Strategic Plans which were seemingly ignored.

B. An expression of disappointment that despite suitable correspondence being issued to the various applicants the Board had not been involved in any material discussions with any party between January 2019 and February 2023.

C. The adequacy of the surface water system and the use of SuDS.

D. A response to a question raised by the Boards Chair concerning the previous means of calculating the contribution fee based on an unregulated discharge. Please note that the contribution fee is the subject of further discussion, see item 4 in the Clerks report, and payment of this contribution figure has not been requested.

E. The increased maintenance costs for the Board as the importance of the Foot Drove Drain increases with greater expectations from landowners, residents, occupants, operators and promoters of development which requires more regular maintenance operations to alleviate flooding.

F. Noting the developers concern about the economic viability of the Business Park it was pointed out that the Board, and its rate payers, face a similar challenging time with increasing operating costs but also needing to face the challenge of providing value to its ratepayers with an efficient water level and flood risk management system that reduces:

   i. The risk of endangering local residents/occupants/operators, including adverse impacts on people's wellbeing and mental health;
   ii. Damage to property and infrastructure;
   iii. Wasteful expenditure at the publics expense to undertake remedial works and/or cause unacceptable detriment to the environment.

G. The need for an agreed phased drainage strategy.

NB. Upon further reflection it is subsequently considered that, if possible, this needs to be agreed with the District Council, the LLFA and if necessary Anglian Water and the Maintenance Provider.

An internal virtual meeting attended by the Boards Chair was held in June to discuss the detail of the suggested scheme. At this meeting it was agreed to advise agents of the Board's concerns that there is insufficient information to determine that there will be no increase in runoff and advise them of the Board's suggested way forward.

A letter was received from the Town Council in July advising that:

- It had been approached by the developer asking it to expedite the situation with the Board.

- The Town Council had worked with the District Council to "bring the plan to fruition", a simple conversation at this stage highlighting the need to discuss the issues with the Board could have avoided the current position and urged "all of you to do all you can to move this issue forward."

The Chair confirmed that he had also received an approach from the Town Mayor and had advised that the Board were trying to "prevent flooding of the site".

Following a further internal "design" meeting held in early August the Board's Chair was consulted. Unable to attend the "round the table meeting" with the developer a few days later, due to other commitments, he confirmed the Board's position.

At the meeting:

a. The applicant's consultant argued that a pumped discharge would contradict that of the LLFA and HDC and is not sustainable. This principle is also held by the Middle Level Commissioners, but it is accepted that there are circumstances where their use is appropriate.

   Examples of sites where the use of pumps had been approved by the LLFA subsequently been forwarded to the applicant together with an advisory that the Board and not the LLFA are the "approving authority" within its district.

b. As Galliard Homes will remain the freeholder for the lifetime of the project, meaning that the Board will only have one applicant to deal with for each phase, rather than several unknown purchasers, it was suggested that this will give the Board some comfort that their requirements will be met. Galliard will also remain responsible for any maintenance company set up.

c. Galliard Homes can prepare a contract/document to state that the agreed discharge will be kept to for further development phases, which can be attached to discharge consent application document for phase 1. This would enable the Board to take relevant legal action if this were not adhered to, giving the Board some confidence in the phased consenting approach.

d. Galliard Homes are prepared to pay a one-off 'commuted sum' type of payment on top of the contribution fee to the Board to help maintain their system. The figure to be agreed between the Board and Galliard Homes.

Some clarification concerning the Boards requirements were made during September/October and it was considered that reasonable progress was being made, and a response was awaited but in early December, a letter was received from Irwin Mitchell Solicitors.

This letter threatened legal action under the IDB Byelaw appeal process but also suggested a compromise regarding discharge contributions. This was handled under the Board's Complaints Procedure.

Investigation into the site history in response to this letter determined that no duly made application has been received for the site. An incomplete byelaw consent was received in July 2024, but no payment was made by the applicants and a number of other consents including discharge would be needed for the site.

The developer has been advised of this several times and a response clarifying this was sent to both the applicant and their solicitors to enable further conversation. An interim invoice has also been sent relating to post application work to date and we have requested a meeting to agree a way forward. Paul Burrows has spoken to the developer on 11th December regarding this matter and a further discussion with the Board and meeting with the developer will be arranged.

A Reserved Matters Planning application (HDC 24/00550/REM) was submitted to the District Council on the 25th March. At the time of writing this is "In progress".

During discussions, the developer has been advised that the Boards concerns were the successful delivery of an appropriate development that minimises the potential impacts of increased flood risk in the area and/or prevents unacceptable detrimental impacts on the environment.

In respect of the latter the relevant documents submitted as part of the above mentioned planning application have been reviewed, and the Commissioners Ecologist has provided some comment and suggested a condition to be included in the consent documents.

3. IDB Recovery Fund T2B

Funding allocations for Tranche 2A were confirmed in mid-November and work is underway to deliver by the end of March 2025.

A bid was submitted on behalf of the Board for Pump overhaul as part of an IDB package totalling £2000.00

The bid was successful and work should be completed by the end of March.

At the end of November 2024, we received confirmation of the bidding window for the remaining £19m. `Expressions of interest for Tranche 2B are to be submitted between 4th December 2024 and 31st January 2025, for capital-only works to be delivered in 2025/26. Outcome of the bids is expected at the end of February 2025.

The criterion for bids is for the modernisation, innovation, and upgrade of IDB assets and waterways, making them more effective, sustainable, environmentally friendly for agricultural land, flood risk and rural communities.

4. Capital Programme

4.1 In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GiA) the current indication is that there will be no further funding allocation within the current spending review period. This uncertainty has curtailed delivery of system study. Therefore the 2024/25 allocation will be used to undertake detailed asset inspections of the pumping stations to inform future capital works.

The Board is asked to decide how to proceed, and it is recommended that the Board considers how it will fund future capital improvement works.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Improvement Programme
Appendix 2: List of applications since last meeting
Appendix 3: M&E Report
Appendix 4: MLC001: Middle Level System Flood & Drainage Infrastructure Capacity

Appendix 1

Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board

Capital Improvement Programme (2025/2026)

		PREVIOUS YEARS	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	FUTURE YEARS	ALL YEARS
		Pre Yr 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Post Year 10	Total Expenditure
	System Study (100% GiA funded)*			40	0									
Green Dyke p/s	Pumping station replacement (includes surveys, detailed design, construction)	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	300.0	2,500.0	2,500.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5300.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment 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 automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
New Fen p/s	Pumping station replacement (includes surveys, detailed design, construction)	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	700.0	5,000.0	5,000.0	0.0	0.0	10700.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment 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 automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upwood Common p/s	Pumping station replacement (includes surveys, detailed design, construction)	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6,000.0	6000.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.4
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drainage Channels	Upwood Common/Green Dyke catchment	0	0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
		0	**0**	**0**	**20**	**5**	**0**	**310**	**3,200**	**7,500**	**5,000**	**0**	**6,000**	**22,035**

*Detailed asset inspections only

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
416	H/24/00550/REM	Galliard Homes	Commercial	Ramsey Business Park, St Marys Road, Ramsey
417	H/24/01128/FUL	Messrs T & A Knowles	Residence – 1 dwelling	Ugg Mere Court Road, Ramsey St Marys
418	H/24/01111/FUL	Mr C Jarlett	Leisure – Paddock to Holiday Let	Harpers Drove, Ramsey Heights
419	Provision of info request	Client of BWB Consulting		Site in Upwood

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

There have been no infiltration device applications acknowledged since the last meeting.

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**8**
Meeting:	**RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**
Date:	**Thursday 9th January 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Dave Bantoft**

1. **M&E key messages and advice**

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

In light of uncertainty of GiA funding the Board is strongly advised to consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement. The Board is asked to instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

1.2 Electricity Readings

Taking regular and accurate manual electricity meter readings is very important; even for sites with meters that are read remotely. There have been cases of significant variances between bills and actual usage, regular meter readings and pump hours readings are essential for verifying bills and forecasting usage.

Moving forward it is requested that the Pump Attendants/District Officers take electricity meter readings and pump run hours readings monthly (as close to the 1st of each month as they can) and then forward them onto the M&E Engineer David Bantoft 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.

Since the last board meeting Leo Butler provided meter reads for the RU&GR Pump Stations in July and September 2024 on request.

2. **Maintenance and minor works**

2.1 Upwood Common Pumping Station

The pump noise was investigated further during July 2024. The motor was removed to allow access to the thrust bearing which was found to be worn and was replaced in situ without the need for pump removal and complete overhaul. Onsite assistance by Leo Butler was greatly appreciated and allowed the intrusive work to completed in one day. The works has since been granted funding from the T2 fund.

The electrical controls are now over 20 years old and the control panel would benefit from overhaul or replacement, which is likely to cost in the region of £8k to £12k. The pump was last overhauled in 2014 and since the thrust bearing replacement has run quietly.

2.2 New Fen Pumping Station

The pumps have run well so far through the current pumping season.

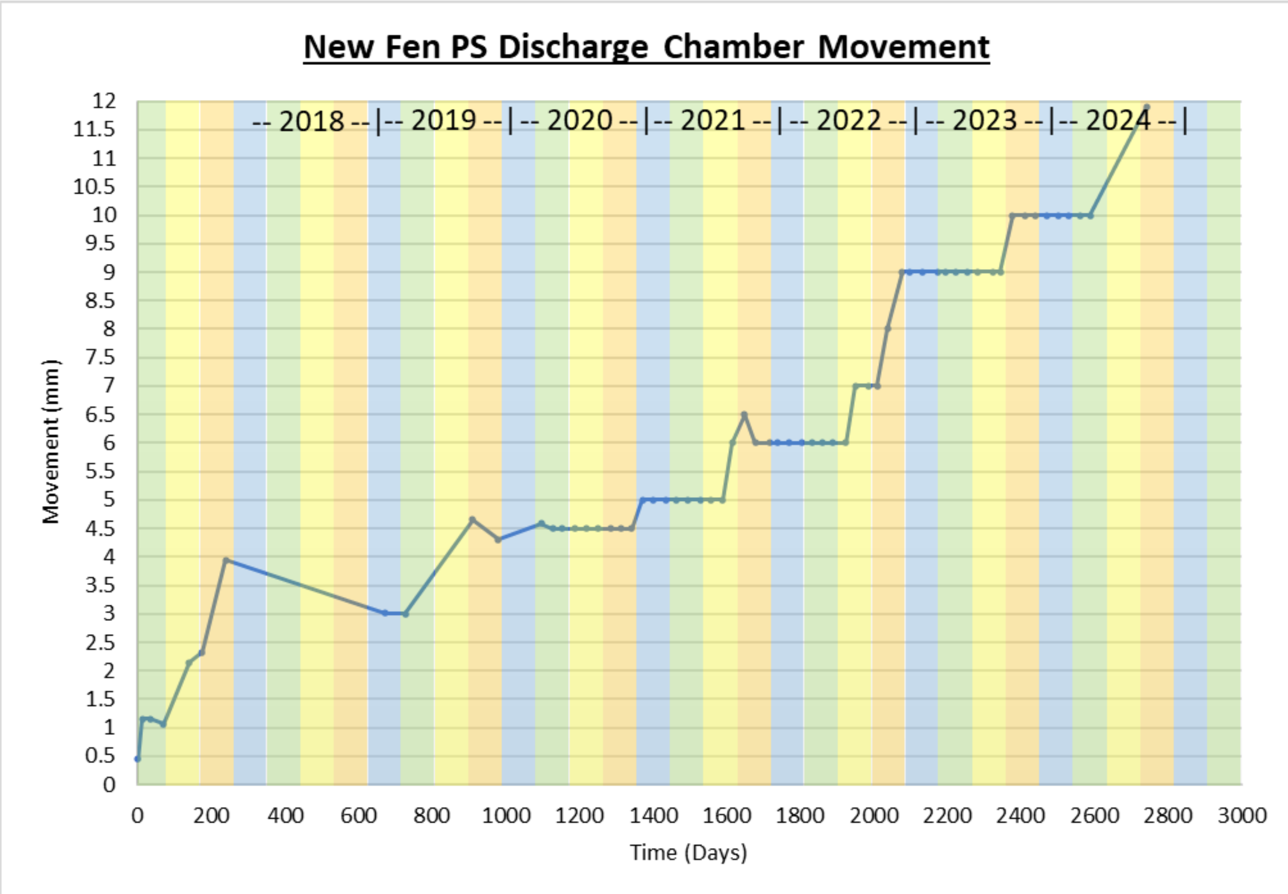
2.3 Green Dyke

There have been several issues with the control panel over the last few years, many components have been replaced but the unit is over 45 years old and should be replaced. The replacement is likely to cost in the region of £8k to £12k.

The last recorded overhaul of the pump is 1986. It has recently had issues with noises and vibration which are thought to have been caused by something trapped within the pump. This vibration has caused loosening of the motor and gearbox connecting bolts. The pump has been checked over above ground, all connections checked and tightened as necessary and the control reset to allow a smoother start. **The pump is currently running but it should be removed for complete overhaul which is likely to cost in the region of £40k to £60k.** This depends on the amount of wear and how complexity of the removal and reinstallation.

The discharge flap door is noisy which to be investigated fully will need the discharge area to be dammed to allow full inspection and plan for repair.

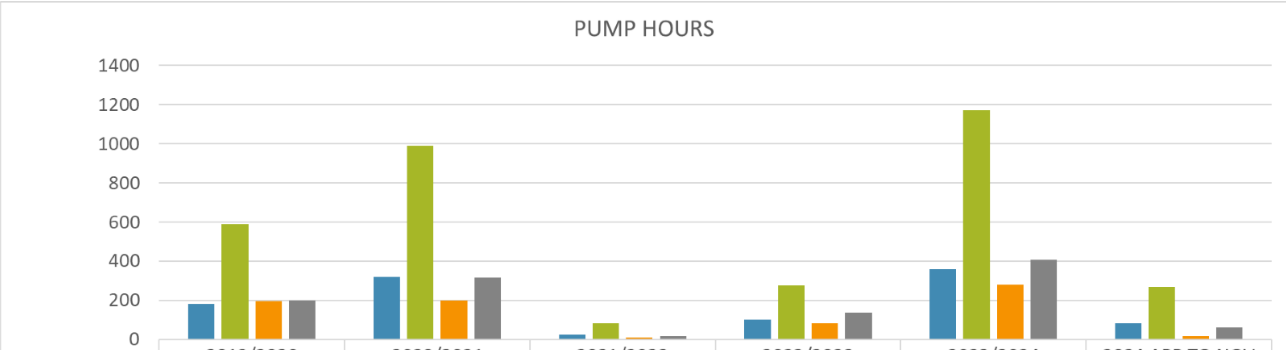
2.4 New Fen



The discharge chamber continues to show movement with a 1.9mm increase (from 10mm to 11.9mm measured at the same point) between April and September this year and the control building slab is moving. A plan needs to be put in place for remedial work as the site is unstable.

Please approve for site levels and measurements to be taken regularly onsite.

3. Pumping summary



	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024 APR TO NOV
GREEN DYKE	181	319	26	102	361	81
NEW FEN 1	589	988	81	274	1173	270
NEW FEN 2	195	200	11	83	280	18
UPWOOD	200	315	17	138	406	61

4. Inspections

4.1 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are in date as shown below.

Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley	Green Dyke	12-Jul-2022	12-Jul-2027
Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley	New Fen	12-Jul-2022	12-Jul-2027
Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley	Upwood Common	12-Jul-2022	12-Jul-2027

5. Pumping Station Key Dates

5.1 **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, District Studies and development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement.**

	Station			
Station	**Built**	**Pump**	**Pump Overhaul**	**Controls**
Green Dyke	1954	1977	1986	1977
New Fen	1949	1964 (1) 2005 (2)	2021 (1) 2005 (2)	2005
Upwood Common	1966	1966	2014	1994

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

Appendix 4

middle level commissioners

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862

Standing Advice Note MLC001:

Middle Level Flood and Drainage Infrastructure Capacity

Issued: 01 May 2024 (Version 1)

Key messages

A. Our flood and drainage infrastructure should be considered as 'at capacity' during October to April.

B. Unless there is a compelling exception case, we will not consent surface water discharges greater than greenfield run-off rate and/or any new water entering our catchment across a watershed.

C. We consider that the cumulative impact of attenuating surface water from developments and timing of discharges has been to elongate the duration that our system is under stress. This increases our operational costs and could increase the risk of flooding.

D. We are concerned that there is seemingly no post-construction review of SuDS against their design and performance reviews through their lifecycle. Therefore, even well-designed SuDS may not be performing as expected/consented and there may be a cumulative impact of this across our catchment. Long term appropriate maintenance and inspection is considered a deficiency.

E. The opportunity to release stored water into our system during May to September should be actively explored within strategic flood risk assessments, development masterplans and local flood risk management strategies and in consultation with our engineers.

F. In considering and granting planning permission, Local Planning Authorities need to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development upon their special levy and future funding requests under Defra's Partnership Funding policy. It should be noted that under this policy housing built or converted after January 2012 is not included within FCRM government grant-in-aid calculations.

G. Prior to granting outline planning permission, Local Planning Authorities must consider whether any proposed Biodiversity Net Gain provisions will be compatible with the flood risk management activities undertaken by MLC and other IDBs, for the full 30-year registration period. If this is not known, the LPA should seek advice from MLC prior to granting outline planning permission.

H. In considering and granting planning permission, Local Planning Authorities ought to secure funding from developers towards future capital investment in our water management infrastructure.

I. The Environment Agency needs to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development and sub-optimal SuDS upon the Highland Water claims from the Middle Level Commissioners.

J. **As statutory consultees and fellow Risk Management Authorities under the Flood & Water Management Act, Lead Local Flood Authorities and the Environment Agency need to consider and reflect this advice within their responses to Local Planning Authorities so as not to increase flood risk within the Middle Level.**
K. **Developers and Local Planning Authorities ought to consider the adoption of measures such as rainwater harvesting and re-use to avoid as much water as possible from entering the drainage network.**
L. **When considering abstraction licences for unrestricted winter fill applications from irrigators within the Middle Level catchment, the Environment Agency should take account of the potential benefit to the capacity of the system, operational costs, Highland Water costs and their responsibility to reduce flood risk within their determinations.**
M. **In addressing historic mis-connections to the foul sewer network and within changes to discharges of treated effluent water, Anglian Water and Local Authorities need to appreciate the potential impact on the surface water drainage network and receiving system.**
N. **Internal Drainage Boards within the Middle Level catchment may wish to consider adopting similar Standing Advice. They also need to appreciate and plan for the limitations in the capacity of the MLC system withing their own pumping station improvement schemes.**

Advice Primarily For:

- **Local Planning Authorities (LPAs): Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council, Peterborough City Council**
- **Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs): Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Norfolk County Council**
- **Minerals & Waste Planning Authorities; Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council**
- **Highways Authorities: National Highways, Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Developers**
- **Internal Drainage Boards within the Middle Level catchment area**
- **Anglian Water**

About us:
The Middle Level Commissioners are a public authority comprising agricultural ratepayers (those rated on >100 acres of land) who benefit from drainage services provided by their watercourses and assets.

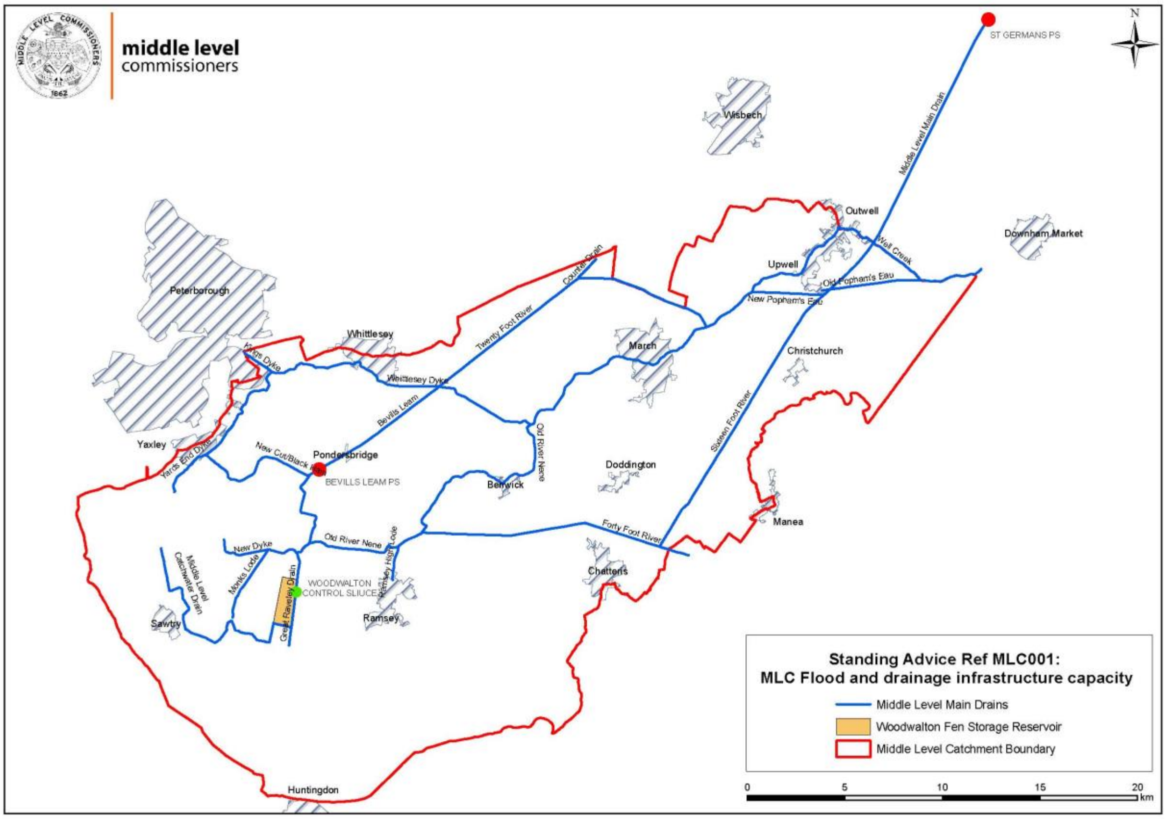
The Commissioners elect a Board and, via an Executive Committee, appoint a Chief Executive who leads a staffing structure to deliver their various statutory duties and responsibilities.

The Commissioners are, for all intents and purposes, an Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore a Risk Management Authority under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 and we have a duty to enhance the environment under the Environment Act 2021. The Commissioners also have duties and powers under bespoke Acts of Parliament, most notable of these is our role as the fourth largest Navigation Authority in England. We also provide a summer water transfer service, with legacy rights to import water into our catchment from the River Nene.

We are not statutory consultees in the Town & Country Planning Act process, however paragraph 166 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) advises that strategic policies "should take account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards.". Independent from the planning process, developers are likely to need consent from us and/or an Internal Drainage Board under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and/or Byelaws.

We only have a technical team of 2.5 staff inputting and responding as a non-statutory consultee into planning applications and consent determinations on behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners and over thirty other Internal Drainage Boards in the area.

Geographical coverage:
The Middle Level catchment boundary plus areas where there is the potential through development to transfer water across the watershed into the Middle Level.



Our system:
We own and operate two major land drainage pumping stations. These work in combination with approximately 190km of waterways and 300km of raised embankments to convey excess water from, and provide flood resilience to, land, property and businesses within our 750km^2 catchment.

Whilst the Fens is known for being flat, the catchment's higher land towards and beyond the A1 is very responsive to rainfall and funnels water quickly into the lowest land in the country, below sea level. We provide the second tier of drainage along with 25 Internal Drainage Boards and a handful of private districts either pumping or gravity draining into our system. We have no operational control over the 70+ pumping stations that add water into our system. Within the Middle Level 61% of the catchment is pumped twice, 19% is pumped three times and 15% is pumped once.

Our booster station at Bevills Leam elevates and transfers water from the lowest land in the country (we call this our Bevills Pond) into the main Middle Level drainage system (we call this our St Germans Pond). Bevills Leam Pumping Station was constructed in the 1980s and requires major refurbishment in the coming years.

Our pumping station at Wiggenhall St Germans is the largest land drainage pumping station in the UK. It came online in 2010 and is the only outfall from our system, pumping excess water from the whole catchment into the Great Ouse Tidal River. It has an 80-year design life.

The biggest operational challenge we have in times of flood concern is the ability to get vast amounts of water through Bevills Leam Pumping Station and then through the main system (high level carriers and embanked watercourses) to St Germans. Both Stations need to pump early to lower water levels, creating a 'hole' which then draws water to them, given the fact there is no fall/gradient in their respective ponds.
Our system is effectively a giant bowl, with the Bevills Pond being a bowl within that giant bowl. The Bevills Pond is a greater concern in terms of capacity than the St Germans Pond and is considered particularly vulnerable to intense, repeat and elongated rainfall and run-off.

The standard of protection the system provides to local communities, businesses and agricultural land was last assessed prior to 2020. A strategic assessment recommended significant, complex and costly bank raising and desilting works to return the capacity of our system to a 1.51% (or 1 in 66 year) annual exceedance probability for a 15-year design life until the next major intervention will be required.

Will there be future increases in the capacity of our system?
This cannot be, and is not, guaranteed. The current management approach across the Great Ouse Fens is to sustain infrastructure standards of service until a longer-term strategic plan is developed. It should be noted that sustaining standards of service does not keep pace with the impacts of climate change on the standards of protection our infrastructure provides.

We are working with the Environment Agency as part of Fens 2100+. This is a £9.8m programme to develop a Fens-wide flood resilience investment strategy that achieves long-term value for money and generates regional and national benefits. It's being developed with, and for, Flood Risk Management Authorities so they can plan for the next 20-25 years of flood risk management.

Nicola Oldfield
Chief Engineer, Middle Level Commissioners
chiefofficers@middlelevel.gov.uk

1 May 2024

The Board considered the reports of the Consulting Engineers and in particular they do consider their district as at capacity, supporting the need to be clear on this stance with planners and developers.

Ramsey Business Park

RESOLVED

> In pursuance of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting when matters are being considered of a confidential nature.

Capital Programme

The Board made no change or decision regarding its capital programme.

M&E

The Board considered the report from the M&E Engineer. A Butler queried the depth of the inspections and was concerned that there was little resilience and no failsafe within the Board's stations. He urged the Board that investment was required. In terms of the recommended control panel overhauls L Butler said that he didn't see a problem and a need to invest as they are mostly reliable.

R Blackhurst added that there was a dilemma in terms of how much the Board invests and in what specifically when each of the three stations will likely need major works or replacing over the next 5-10 years.
P Burrows suggested that the M&E Engineer be invited to join the next inspection to discuss and qualify the recommendations.

B.1444 Health & Safety

L Butler outlined that there was nothing further to report and the improved signage is awaited.

B.1445 District Officers Report

L Butler outlined that the programme of drains works had gone well other than the expected challenges along Middle Drove. He added that they had also cleared the troublesome field. He passed his thanks to A Butler for his continued support who added that weed and reed were becoming increasingly problematic. R Blackhurst added that this is why it is important that the Board's search for a suitable min-digger continued given operations are becoming increasingly unsafe and a two-person job. He added that it may be time to review the three-year rotation approach, even if a one-year programme may prove to be too much. A Wagstaff added that within any change they would need to consider ecological and environmental risks.

P Burrows added that in considering any change in approach, the Board could seek input or an assurance review from Morgan Lakey the MLC Operations Manager who oversees the maintenance programme for many IDBs.

L Butler added that it had been suggested that some form of netting or boom may be an option to control weed and reed before it reaches the stations. R Blackhurst suggested this may shift the operational challenge if additional plant is needed, but various options ought to be explored.

R Blackhurst thanked L Butler for his work on behalf of the Board.

RESOLVED

L Butler to explore options for control of weed and reed upstream of pumping station weedscreens and bring options and their pros and cons back to the Board for their consideration.

B.1446 Governance
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**11**
Meeting:	**RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**GOVERNANCE**
Date:	**Tuesday 9th January 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider and approve the Annual Return 2023/2024
B. Consider and approve the Auditors Report for 2023/2024
C. Note the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.
D. Consider and approve of authorised officers for operational/regulatory roles
E. Consider and approve resolutions regarding new Responsible Finance Officer
F. Consider the pumping station valuation proposal
G. Review and approve the updated Policy included as appendix.
H. Consider and approve the Data Protection Officer
I. 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.
J. 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.
K. Exercise of Public Rights
L. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments

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 Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2023/2024

a) To consider the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended on the 31st March 2024. (Appendix 1)

b) To consider the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended on the 31st March 2024. (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).

1.3 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. Authorisations

We have undertaken a review of how we enact our powers of entry and are introducing new identification badges for all MLC employees alongside training in conflict resolution and creation of a violence and aggression at work policy. Contractors working on our behalf are issued with a letter of authorisation. This is an approach that administered IDBs would also benefit from.

The Board are asked to confirm the stance that all employees and contractors of the Middle Level Commissioners are considered as duly authorised officers and therefore able to use the Board's powers and IDB Byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board.

The Board are asked to confirm the stance that their Chairman, Vice Chairman, District Officer(s), pump attendants and employees (if applicable) are considered as duly authorised officers and therefore able to use the Board's powers and IDB Byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board.

4. Responsible Finance Officer

Robert Hill the MLC Treasurer leaves at the end of January 2025 and Andrew Wool has been appointed as MLC Head of Finance. There are a number of resolutions recommended to the Board to manage the transition and improve resilience, thus reducing risk to the Board.

The Board are requested to approve, that while there is a Service Level Agreement for the provision of clerking services in place between the Board and the Middle Level Commissioners:

i) That the role of the position of Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners is to include the appointment as Responsible Financial Officer to the Board.

ii) That the person appointed as Head of Finance for the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and authorised to sign cheques and authorised to make payments on behalf of the Board.

iii) That the person appointed as clerk to the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and be authorised to sign cheques and to authorise payments on behalf of the Board.

iv) That the person appointed as Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners will be appointed as the administrator on behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners to the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Middle Level Commissioners.

v) That following Mr Robert Hill leaving the employment of the Commissioners that the Head of Finance of the Middle Level Commissioners be delegated the authority to appoint a member of the finance team to be an additional administrator on the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Board.

5. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

5.1 Our insurance has been arranged using Towergate insurance brokers for the year to 31st March 2025. AXA offered a 2 year extension of the tri-partite agreement we had previously signed and this was accepted as they offered to keep our business combined policy premium at the same rate for 2025-2026, subject to there being any changes to the existing cover, i.e. increase in valuations.

Having professional valuations of ours and IDB pumping stations for insurance purposes is an action identified by our internal auditors. We have received a proposal from a company called Kroll and they have offered two options:

- Sample site visits to a representative set of 15 pumping stations followed by a desk top assessment covering the remainder - £30k + VAT and expenses.
- Site visits to all pumping stations - £55k + VAT and expenses.

This is clearly a sizable project that we would need to oversee as client and facilitate a seamless programme of visits with relevant IDB officers to keep expenses reasonable. Within their terms and conditions there is also client liability for the quality and completeness of data and information they request in order to fulfil their valuations. We will need to review the proposal with IDB Chairs and establish how costs would be apportioned.

The Board's is asked for their opinion on the pumping station valuation proposal.

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

RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY IDB
INSURED VALUES OF PUMPING STATIONS

PUMPING STATIONS

	As At 1st April 2025	
New Fen Pumping Station	2,000,000.00	
Upwood Common Pumping Station	1,000,000.00	
Green Dyke Pumping Station	1,000,000.00	
	4,000,000.00	Index linked

6. Policy Reviews

We have an ongoing review and update of policies. Within this we are also improving our management of Freedom of Information requests. The update to the Privacy Policy has identified some area of Data Protection that require further attention. It is timely to schedule a Data Audit, which will help to identify any further areas that require updating. Additional staff and Board/IDB training will be a likely result, along with some other strengthening of procedures across the business.

The Board are asked to note the update and re-publication of their Complaints Procedure and Privacy Policy.

The Board are asked to review and approve the publication of an Anti-Bribery policy (Appendix 3) which includes the need to log offers of gifts and hospitality.

The Board are asked to approve that the MLC Lead Clerk, currently Ruth Martin, acts as their Data Protection Officer and acknowledge that this role will be associated within the incumbent employee role of MLC Lead Clerk.

7. IDB1

7.1 Defra Reporting

All IDBs are required to report annually to Defra via an Annual Report called an IDB1 form. These reports are copied to the Environment Agency and to the relevant District Councils. In September 2024 an updated form has been issued to cover the 2023/24 returns and is due for submission by 28 February 2025.

There are new or enhanced questions within the form which indicate increasing expectations on IDBs of government.

In summary:

- Breakdown with financial reporting of electricity and fuel cost
- Reporting on biodiversity enhancement expenditure alongside conservation
- Value of drainage rate debt
- Detail of any Public Sector Cooperation Agreements

- Whether a specific Board Member is focussed on ensuring that health and safety is considered within board decision making.
- Significant new reporting expectations in terms of public engagement, including media engagement, public meetings and public events.

8. Exercise of Public Rights

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

9. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments:

9.1 The clerk to report.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Appendix 1 Annual Return 2023/2024
Appendix 2 Auditors Report 2023/2024
Appendix 3 Anti-Bribery policy

Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
Section 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015 /234)

1 The Audit of accounts for the Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board for the year ended 31st March 2024 has been completed and the accounts have been published.

2 The Annual Governance & Accountability Return including the auditor's certificate and opinion is available for inspection and copying by any local government elector of the area of Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board

The Clerk
Ramsey Upwood & Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Board

Date of Announcement: 30th August 2024

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, 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 2023/24 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 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 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 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 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 2022/23 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

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

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 09/05/2024 15/05/2024 16/05/2024

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

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

Date: 16/05/2024

***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 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

08/05/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

B-1432

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

Chair [signature]

Clerk [signature]

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

RAMSEY UPWOOD & GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	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	250,868	275,558	*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	72,459	78,498	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	11,068	11,721	*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	58,837	87,127	*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	275,558	278,650	*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	264,908	311,800	*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	1,770,000	1,770,000	*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 19/04/2024

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

08/05/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

=B:1433

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

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Ramsey, Upwood and Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board– DB0080**

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 2024; 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 2023/24

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 2023/24

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 2024.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature	PKF Littlejohn LLP	Date	27/08/2024

Appendix 2

Whitings LLP
Chartered Accountants
Fenland House, 158 Hostmoor Avenue
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AX
t: 01354 652304
e: march@whitingsllp.co.uk
w: whitingsllp.co.uk

BB/MM053
30 June 2024

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 2023-2024

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 2024, 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 continue in 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 and will continue to focus on for future 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

Following HMRC's announcement that double cab pickups would be treated as cars rather than vans for benefit in kind purchases from 1st July 2024 this was swiftly reigned in following a backlash from affected parties, largely from the construction and agricultural sectors. Given the new Labour governments need to increase the tax receipts into the Treasury this could be a measure that is revisited and we would advise that you be mindful of any changes that arise in the forthcoming Autumn Budget, although nothing has been confirmed at this stage.

With regards to other employee benefits, we note that where applicable these are being recognised as benefits in kind and disclosed on the form 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, and for this and other areas will be following the autumn budget closely. 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 have started 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 recognised within the accounts of applicable boards are being monitored and written back as required. There are still isolated cases where provisions are "brought forward and carried forward" that relate in excess of the standard life of debt, being 6 years. Whilst we are satisfied there is reasonable rationale for their retention we would question whether payments could be reinforced if the life of debt has been exceeded, with the exception of amounts recognised in respect of development contributions. We would encourage continued review of provisions brought forward from prior years, especially those exceeding the standard life of debt, writing these off as appropriate, with board approval as appropriate.

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 refer to the significant overspend arising in the 2023/24 against the budget set for the same period. We understand that this is largely due to the unprecedented levels of rainfall experienced during the 2023/24 winter period which in turn resulted in the most significant volume of water ever pumped by the organisation. Which has resulted in pumping stations operating at capacity for a number of months, using significantly more fuel and electricity to enable this.

Given the change in weather patterns globally and in our region, we would recommend that a higher budgeted energy and fuel cost be provided for in the budget going forwards, and that the organisation maintain sufficient reserves to combat any such deficiencies in the future. Consideration should also be taken as to whether budgets should be updated for actual results if significant variances are apparent, to ensure they remain meaningful to the individual boards to which they relate.

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 as there is no ability to increase revenue through rates and special levy once they have been set. The original budget is therefore used as comparative to analyse variances of actual expenditure against.

We have started to use a 5-year average for pumping volumes, calculating these against actual/anticipated electricity unit rates. For the 2024/2025 rate setting process we started to build in a 'climate change factor' into the 5-year average calculation, which will be refined for future years. While aware of the need to hold sufficient balances, this was highlighted during the 2023/2024 storm events and as well as having climate change awareness in the budget setting process Boards also were required to take steps concerning the reinstatement of balances depleted during the year.

It is intended to introduce a range of Key Health Indicators for all boards, part of which will be taking into account the impact of climate change on budgets and relevant level of balances required.

5. Surplus Funds

In previous years we have communicated the importance of investing cash assets that are not required to fund operational needs, to combat the erosion of these liquid assets through inflation. We are pleased to see that the organisation have taken heed of this advice and made a number of deposits with Barclays, in addition to discussing the potential pooling of cash resources with IDB's under their administration to gain access to higher rates of interest. Whilst inflation has now fallen back to 2%, the lowest level in nearly three years, it is important to continue to reinvest and "sweat" these assets going forward.

Client comment0:

We are currently making treasury deposits for individual Boards within the mandated authority given by each authority 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 at lower than market rate 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

Last year we noted that the Financial Regulations were due to be updated by the end of the year, following a delay due to the retirement of the Chief Executive and appointing of the new Chief Executive/Clerk in February 2023. We are pleased to see that during 2024 the boards are reviewing and approving the updated Financial Regulations and Financial Code and look forward to considering this area during the course of the 2024/25 internal audit.

Client comments:

There will be a full review of the provision of clerking services and will be, as has been mentioned reviewing these regulations for presentation to boards for the 2025 meeting season.

8. Bank Transfers

We are satisfied with the accuracy of bank and cash balances and have successfully reconciled these to the underlying accounting records. We note that transfers between bank accounts are being recorded as movement per-month in the accounting records, on enquiry this was due to time constraints experienced within the finance department during the financial year. Whilst we are satisfied that reconciliations have been carried out manually correctly, we would recommend that all bank movements are fully reflected in the postings to the accounting software of the board.

Client comment:

Concerning audit point 5 – surplus funds, to maximise returns within the mandated authority with Barclays we are required to operate linked accounts, with receipts/payments being made from the standard current account. This account has a fixed balance which is adjusted following receipts/payments to it – surplus balances above the fixed limit transferred to the Business Premium account, deficit balances below the fixed amount transferred from the Business Premium account to the current account. These transfers are adjusted through the accounting software in relation to the statement frequency, with both accounts being fully reconciled – a credit in one account being matched with a debit in the other. Current staff resources do not allow for additional time to be spent transferring individual values, the net transfer for the statement being made – as we are doing this for around 28 accounts this currently provides the best value for money to the boards.

9. **National Saving & Investment bank accounts**

We understand that a formal complaint has been lodged with National Savings & Investments. Firstly in relation to the organisation and its administered entities desire to change the signatories on the investment accounts held with this organisation and secondly due to the fact that bank statements for the period to 31 March 2024 have not been received for the majority of boards. As a result interest receivable has had to be estimated, we have considered the estimations and are happy that these are reasonable by reference to the last received statement and the applicable interest rate. We look forward to reviewing the position in the 2024/25 financial year.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

This was an unfortunate situation but to recognise the interest in the correct accounting period estimates were made. Differences between estimates and actuals will be adjusted through the 2024/2025 accounting statements.

10. **Website Publication**

We note that there has been, for a number of years, significant information available to the public. We note that for some boards the latest information does not appear to have been updated, for example the JPAG practitioner guide on the website across all the boards has not been updated since the 2018/19. An updated version of JPAG guide is made available each year.

The same situation related to the Annual Return Form (DEF-IDB1), which appeared have not been updated since year ended 31 March 2022.

We would recommend that all items are updated on the website for applicable boards as soon as practicable, or remove if regulations do not require such information to be published on the website.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

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.

11. **Outstanding old cheques and unreconciled transactions**

We are pleased to note that the majority of old outstanding cheques and unreconciled transactions are being written off across all Board in the timely manner. However, there was the isolated cases where this has not occurred. We would suggest that concerted effort is made to ensure all old and unreconciled transactions are written off as soon as it is clear that such transactions will not be paid in or received.

Client comment:

Bank reconciliations should be looked at and cleared for older unpresented transactions, however, these will initially be transferred to debtor/creditor until their statutory standard life has expired. For 'house-keeping' these will be looked at as part of the year-end processes.

12. Fees for the service of District Officers and Pump Attendants

We have noted that not all boards are approving payment rates for the services rendered by District Officers and/or Pumping Attendant during the board meetings, instead approval is confirmed as a percentage increase, generally being in line with the Middle Level Commissioners award.

We appreciate that the board is approving the payment lists, where the amount is specified. However, we would suggest to include the amount to the discussion during the meeting and confirm the approved sum in the minutes as per prior years.

Client comment:

District Officer/pump attendants are contracted services and the boards are approving an amount for the provision of these services, however, the point is noted and the actual amount payable discussed at the meeting should be recorded in the minutes.

Specific Points

Nightlayers IDB

During our review it was noted that land sold during the year was not recorded on the fixed asset register. Our subsequent enquiries found that as the land was considered of minimal value individually this was included within the adjoining pumping station's valuation and was within the footprint of the old pumping station site. The consideration achieved is higher than would generally be expected due to its importance to a local developer.

We would suggest that you consider whether any other parcels of land held by administered boards could be sold in similar circumstances and if so, whether the valuation individually or as part of the overall pumping station valuation is appropriate.

Client comment:

While we are aware of these circumstances the Nightlayers position was rare. We will monitor sites which could have areas with potential for re-sale, substantial value can only be attached after developers make applications and this proves to be the only access. Unless these circumstances arise an uplift in valuation will not be possible.

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	£92,912.67
Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Creditor	£93,919.96
Difference	**£1,007.29**

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.

At the 2024 meetings for both Boards amalgamation was discussed and both Boards have approved to enter into discussions concerning a potential amalgamation between the Boards.

March East IDB

During our review it was noted that the pumping station attendants' payments were not all authorised during the year. This included an additional payment to the Binnimoor pumping station's attendant following him taking over from the previous attendant. We understand following discussion with the board that this was the result of an error in the minutes as the fees' amount was not specified, but the payments were clearly approved by the board. We would suggest that the board considers their internal processes for ensuring the accuracy of minutes.

Client comment:

The services of pump attendant are carried out by contractors and the Board approves the payment for these services. Procedures have been looked at to ensure proper recording in the minutes.

Hundred of Wisbech

We noted that a parcel of land has been transferred to the board during the 2023-24 year with the attenuation pond, sized at approximately 1 acre. This land was estimated by the Chairman and District Officer to have a value totalling £5,000, a value approved by the Board. We have not been provided with any professional valuation or justification with regards to this valuation. We understand that the land cannot be used for development or agriculture, making it difficult to value due to the lack of specific use.

We understand that the consideration of land valuation has conducted after the year end and details should be included in the next published minutes related to June 2024 meeting.

We look forward to reviewing this in due course.

Client comment:

This area is designated as an attenuation pond, holding surface water to discharge at a controlled rate into the District System. The valuation takes into account its use and therefore limited value. In view of this and to maintain value for money for the Board it was agreed by the officers of the Board not to engage professional valuers.

Manea & Welney

During our review, it was noticed that the Debtors Report showed a significant unallocated amount of £1,456,606.99. Following discussion with the client, we understand that this is an isolated incident related to software issue and not down to the human error. We are satisfied that balance showing on the Debtors Report is correct and no difference was identified.

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

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP

middle level commissioners

And administered IDBs

Governance

Anti Bribery Policy

(includes gifts, hospitality & donations)

2024 - 2029

The Bribery Act 2010 is the legislation relating to bribery. Very generally, this is defined as giving someone a financial or other advantage to encourage that person to perform their functions or activities improperly or to reward that person for having already done so. This could cover seeking to influence a decision-maker by giving some kind of extra benefit to that decision maker rather than what can legitimately be offered as part of a tender process.

Government guidance summarises that it is illegal to offer, promise, give, request, agree, receive or accept bribes – and highlights that organisations should have an anti-bribery policy if there is a risk that someone who works for you or on your behalf might be exposed to bribery.

An anti-bribery policy should be appropriate to the level of risk the organisation faces and should include:

- your approach to reducing and controlling the risks of bribery
- rules about accepting gifts, hospitality or donations
- guidance on how to conduct your business, eg negotiating contracts
- rules on avoiding or stopping conflicts of interest

Risk Assessment

The Middle Level Commissioners and administered Internal Drainage Boards are considered as at minimal risk of bribery given that business is undertaken almost entirely within the UK.

As there is very little risk of bribery being committed on behalf of the organisation it is considered that there is no need for extensive written documentation or policies.

The most likely area of MLC or IDB business with a bribery risk are outlined below and these already have adequate controls:

- Bribery by others to secure business from the MLC/IDB
- Bribery by others to secure regulatory decisions from MLC/IDBs
- Bribery by others to secure operational benefits from MLC/IDBs

- Bribery by MLC/IDB employees or MLC Board/IDB members of others to influence an advantage

Control Measures

- MLC/IDB Board Member declarations of interest and the application by the clerk of these within meetings and decision making.
- Boards, their delegated Committees and/or MLC employees as service providers making key procurement and regulatory decisions rather than individuals.
- Application and review of Internal Controls
- Within the MLC staff structure there are no procurement/regulatory decisions made without more than one employee being involved
- Application of Member Code of Conduct and employee performance and disciplinary procedures
- Offers of gifts, hospitality and donations to be reported to the Chief Executive/Clerk.

Gifts, Hospitality and/or Donations

Employees and members should treat with extreme caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that is made to them personally. The person or organisation making the offer may be doing or seeking to do business with the MLC/Board or may be applying to the MLC/Board for some decision to be taken in his favour or someone with whom he is connected.

There are no hard and fast rules about the acceptance or refusal of hospitality or tokens of goodwill. For example, working lunches may be an appropriate way of doing business provided they are approved by the Chief Executive/Clerk and provided no extravagance is involved. In the same way it may be reasonable for staff/members to represent the MLC/Board at a social function or sporting event organised by outside persons or bodies. Persons attending such functions or events as part of an official MLC/Board delegation are exempt from the above registration requirement, providing their attendance has been approved by the Chief Executive.

Each member or employee is personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding risk of damage to public confidence. The receipt and detail of gifts and hospitality should always be reported to the Chief Executive/Clerk.

When gifts and/or hospitality have to be declined, those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operated by the MLC/Board and told why hospitality cannot be accepted. This should be logged within the register in order to track any patterns.

Members and employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers, although the Board will allow members and employees to keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, calendars and diaries of an estimated value below £20. These insignificant items do not require recording in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Acceptance by members and employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal and where the member or employee is satisfied that any purchasing decisions will not be compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, supplies or services are required, employees and members should ensure that the MLC/Board meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

Procedure

MLC/IDB Board Members and Employees are required to log the offer and acceptance/rejection of a gift, hospitality or donation within the Gifts and Hospitality Register by emailing details of the offer to chiefofficers@middlelevel.gov.uk

Dealing with Bribery

Bribery committed by an employee will be considered a disciplinary issue and likely to be treated as gross misconduct.

Bribery or attempted bribery committed by a third party may lead to the termination of the business relationship.

Bribery committed by an MLC or IDB Member will be considered as a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.

a) Completion of the Annual Accounts and Annual Return of the Board – 2023/2024

i) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year that ended on the 31st March 2024

ii) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year that ended on the 31st March 2024

b) Review of Internal Controls

P Burrows reported that the internal controls that the Middle Level Commissioners have in place in their services to the Board have now been summarised and are available on the Boards web-page.

The Board considered and expressed satisfaction with the current system of internal controls.

c) Authorisations

The Board considered the review of authorisations.
RESOLVED

i) The Board considered and authorised that all employees and contractors of the Middle Level Commissioners are considered as duly authorised officers and are therefore able to use the Boards powers and IDB byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board.

ii) The Board confirmed their stance that their Chairman, Vice-Chair and District Officers, Pump Attendants and employees are considered as duly authorised officers and therefore able to use the Boards powers and IDB byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board.

e) Responsible Finance Officer

RESOLVED

The Board considered and approved the recommendations that:

vi) That the role of the position of Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners is to include the appointment as Responsible Financial Officer to the Board.

vii) That the person appointed as Head of Finance for the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and authorised to sign cheques and authorised to make payments on behalf of the Board.

viii) That the Chairman and Vice-Chair be approved to be added to the Barclays Bank Plc mandate.

ix) That the person appointed as clerk to the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and be authorised to sign cheques and to authorise payments on behalf of the Board.

x) That the person appointed as Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners will be appointed as the administrator on behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners to the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Middle Level Commissioners.

xi) That following Mr Robert Hill leaving the employment of the Middle Level Commissioners that the Head of Finance of the Middle Level Commissioners be delegated the authority to appoint a member of the finance team to be an additional administrator on the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Board.

f) Insurance Valuations

The Board noted the current valuations.

g) Policy Reviews & DPO

The Board considered the review of the policies.

RESOLVED

i) The Board considered and approved the policy reviews for the Complaints Procedure, Privacy policy and the Anti-Bribery policy.

ii) That the Board approve that while there is a service level agreement for provision of clerking services in place between the Board and the Middle Level Commissioners, the Middle Level Commissioner's Lead Clerk acts as their Data Protection Officer.

i) Exercise of Public Rights

P Burrows 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.

j) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

P Burrows reported that as part of the Annual Governance review the Board were required to consider if there were any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the authority. He confirmed that there were no such matters that have been raised through the office of the clerk. Members gave consideration to the position.

RESOLVED

That there are no such events that would have an adverse financial impact on the Board/Commissioners that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

B.1447 Finance Report
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	12
Meeting:	**RAMSEY, UPWOOD AND GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 9th January 2024**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider the Finance Officer's summary
B. Note the Budgeting review within Appendix 1.
C. Note the Highland Water contributions
D. Note the Precept to the Environment Agency

Finance Officer’s review and key messages

Storm Recovery Grant

Following the setting of the rates for 2024/2025 we were advised of the criteria for submissions of claims against the Government announced Storm Recovery Grant and a claim for the first phase of funding (T1) was submitted for £21,645.03, which has now been received

Claims were submitted for combined IDB works against the Storm Recovery resilience works (T2) the Environmental Agency have approved these schemes and 50% of the claims have been received. Works are underway in order to get these works delivered by the 31st March 2025 deadline.

1. **Budget Monitoring**

1.1 The current forecast for income/expenditure to 31st March 2025 shows that expenditure could be in-line with the budget against which rates were set. Appendix 1

However, members are advised that these figures are estimating pumping costs to be in-line with the budget proposal against which the rates have been set and should therefore also take into account the significant financial implications major storm events can have on Drainage Board budgets.

The Highland Water claims have been included, these have been adjusted for the Storm Recovery Grant, these funds have now been received and it is the recommendation that the balance of the Storm recovery Grant (T1) is held in reserve.

There will be a full reconciliation of balances at the financial year end.

2. Highland Water Contributions

2.1 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.

2.2 When completing the budget proposal claims were estimated against the likely out-turn for 2023/2024 and the budgeted expenditure for 2024/2025. The winter storm events gave claims significantly in excess of previous claims but following an understanding that the Environment Agency were able to switch funding within their revenue/capital programmes the full estimated claims were included in the rating proposals. The highland water claim included within the rating estimates was £17,337. Following an earlier Government announcement, details were eventually released concerning the Storm Recovery Grant and a claim excess pumping costs for the first trance (T1) was submitted in the sum of £21,645.03.

To adjust for this additional funding the relevant elements of the Storm Recovery Grant (T1) need to be adjusted against the Highland Water claims. The highland water calculation for these additional receipts amounts to £4,092.61, which will be adjusted from the Strom Recovery Grant.

We can confirm that theses adjusted highland water claims have been paid.

The Highland Water claims totalling £17,337.16 were submitted based on actual out-turn. Against this we need to adjust the Storm recovery elements of £4,092.61, leaving a net claim of £13,244.55. We have now been notified by the Environment Agency that they will not be able to meet all payments in full for this year and the payment will be £11,865.33 a shortfall in year of £1,379.22 against the claims.

The early indications are that for 2025/2026 highland water claims will be capped at around £8,125.

3. Precept to the Environment Agency

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.

The precept for 2024/2025 was £5,658.

Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett
Role: Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Budget Monitoring

Appendix 1

RAMSEY UPWOOD AND GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET 2024/2025

		Approved budget 2024/2025 £	Actual to 30th Nov. 2024 £	Forecast to 31st Mar 2025 `
1	Rates and Insurances	1,550	1,951 [A]	2,051 [A]
2	Repairs and Renewals	5,875	3,055 [B]	5,875
3	Fuel	29,000	8,797 [C]	29,000 [D]
4	Drainworks (including District Officer's Fee)	27,000	5,442 [E]	27,000 [F]
5	Administration Charge, Health and Safety Contract, Audit Fee, Printing, Stationery, Advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions Etc.	8,800	3,797	8,800
6	Environment Agency Precept	5,658	5,658	5,658
7	Plant Refurbishment Funding	20,581 [G]	0 [G]	20,581 [G]
8	Improvement Works	75,000	0	0 [H]
9	Reinstatement Of Balances - Yr 1 of 3	5,487	0	5,487 [I]
		178,951	28,700	104,452
	LESS: Government Grant, Revenue Income Etc.	94,541	3,287 [J]	20,036 [J]
		84,410	25,413	84,416

Estimated General Fund

Opening balance	175,428	175,428	175,428
Rates raised	85,238	85,238	85,238
Net expenditure	84,410	25,413	84,416
Storm Recovery/Balances		17,552	23,039
Close balance	176,256	252,805	199,289

Remarks

A - Increased premiums higher than Budgeted.

B - Includes monitoring Subsidence at New fen £893

C - Includes accounts to August, estimated for rest of year to March

D - Provision based on increased annual pumped volume and estimate for new contract rates from October 2024

E - Includes for :-

Flail mowing & tree cutting	1,980
Slubbing	0
	1,980

F - Forecast Includes for :-

Flail mowing & tree cutting	8,100
Slubbing	12,000
	20,100

G - Future works at pumping stations

H - Uncertainty over funding for Catchment Study Consultancy

I - Provision for recovery of balances reduced by winter 2023/24 pumping. Recover over 3 years

J - Includes Interest Received and Wayleave

J - Includes for:

Highland Water claim receipt (Expected as advised by EA)	15,958
Bank interest	3,800
Grant-in-aid - catchment study	0

Does not include provision for replacement of Green Dyke pumping station

Does not include for possible subsidence works at New Fen pumping station

The Board considered the report and noted the observations made by the Responsible Finance Officer.

R Blackhurst enquired as to how the Board's position compared to others. P Burrows outlined that this was in part why key health indicators are looking to be introduced. He added that the Board has three pumping stations that need ongoing capital investment to keep them running and reliable whilst facing increased loading of new development and a changing climate. He added that this investment is beyond the current financial reach of the Board, let along the costs associated with replacement and this is not an unusual position across the Middle Level.

B.1448 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That next Meeting of the Board be held on 30th May 2025 at 14:00. at the Old Nene Golf Club.

B.1449 Any Other Business

None raised

…………………………………………………………………….
Chair

………………………………………..
Date