

SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Swavesey Internal Drainage Board
Held at the Memorial Hall, Swavesey on Tuesday 11th February 2025.

PRESENT

K Wilderspin (Chairman)
J Dodson (Vice-Chair)
Mrs S Dodson
Ms S Ellington (SCDC)

Ms H Parish
N Stroude
Ms N Warren-Green (SCDC)

Mrs Ruth Martin (representing the Clerk to the Board) was in attendance.

Mr Iain Smith also attended as an observer.

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed Mr Iain Smith who was already well known to the Board, and Mrs Ruth Martin who was attending her first meeting of the Board.

Apologies for absence were received from J Burgess.

B.1157 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman 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.

The Chairman declared an interest as Superintendent to the Board and advised that he would vacate the meeting when fees were discussed.

Miss H Parish declared an interest in any discussions relating to Helen Parish.

B.1158 Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. The Chairman reported that due to the pressures of winter works, no progress had been made on the lighting upgrade discussed at the last meeting, and similarly the signage requirements identified in the Cope Report had not been resolved. A meeting to discuss the Investment Strategy had also not been arranged.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board/Commissioners held on the 25th June 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.1159 Constitution & Membership

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP
Date:	Tuesday 11 th February 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	7	N/A		4
Actual	7	2 SCDC	9	
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	J Burgess	Ratepayer	
2	J Dodson	Ratepayer	Vice-Chair
3	S Dodson	Ratepayer	
4	A Hemington	Ratepayer	
5	H Parish	Ratepayer	
6	N Stroude	Ratepayer	
7	K Wilderspin	Ratepayer	Chairman

- 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	N Warren-Green	SCDC	Councillor
2	S Ellington	SCDC	Councillor

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

2. Attendance

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

Elected Members

No	Name	25/6/2024	6/2/2024	7/2/2023	8/2/2022
1	J Burgess			Attended	Attended
2	J Dodson	Present	Present	Attended	Attended
3	S Dodson	Apologies	Present	Attended	Attended
4	A Hemington			Attended	Attended
5	H Parish	Present	Present	Apologies	Attended
6	N Stroude	Present	Present	Attended	Attended
7	K Wilderspin	Present	Present	Attended	Attended

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/12/2024	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022
1	K Wilderspin	Present		Attended	Attended

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	25/6/2024	6/2/2024	7/2/2023	8/2/2022
1	N Warren-Green	Present	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	S Ellington	Present		N/A	N/A

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

- 3.1 To consider the appointments of the Chair & Vice-Chair.
3.2 The next Election will be held in 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 9 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 4 of 9 Board members have reported viewing 2 of the 5 videos.

- 5.3 Members are asked to identify any topics areas they would value further training on as well as any site inspections that would help them undertake their role on the Board more effectively.
- 5.4 Member training is reported to Defra as part of the annual IDB1 return.

Author Name: Polly Tombleson
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

Mrs Martin advised the Board that at present there are no vacancies on the Board, and the Board were then asked to consider the appointments of Chair and Vice Chair.

Ms Parish nominated Mr Wilderspin. This was seconded by Ms Ellington and agreed unanimously. Mr Wilderspin then nominated Mr Dodson as Vice Chairman, and this was seconded by Ms Ellington and agreed unanimously.

Both Mr Wilderspin and Mr Dodson advised that they were happy to accept the nominations.

Annual Appointments

RESOLVED

That Mr K Wilderspin be appointed as Chairman of the Board.

That Mr J Dodson be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Board.

Training

Mrs Martin reminded the Board of the importance of training and asked that they advise the Clerk once the ADA governance training videos were viewed.

B.1160 Clerk's Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	CLERK'S REPORT
Date:	Tuesday 11 th 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 (Transmission) 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 Liquefied 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. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Mrs Martin drew the Board's attention to the Clerks Report and asked the Board to note its content.

Mrs Martin advised the Board of the current position regarding Highland Water and IDB Precept. Although this item would be covered in more detail in the Finance report, Mrs Martin outlined the current position of the reduced payment of Highland Water claims along with the increase in IDB precept. Mr Dodson questioned why the Board should be asked to pay for Precept in full when the Highland Water claim was not being met in full and if there was a good reason why the EA were so short of money.

Mr Smith advised that at the last meeting of the RFCC the IDB representatives had been consulted with and agreed the 2% increase to the Precept. This funding is then used to cover the costs of maintaining the main rivers into which most Boards flow. The EA have been given no additional funding from Defra to meet the additional costs from the Winter funding, and their funding has been reduced from £13 million to £5 million. There is also no GiA funding available, but Mr Smith reported that the local RFCC may consider using the Local Levy funding to cover the shortfall in the Highland Water claim, although this may set an awkward precedent and will take funds from Capital budgets to Maintenance budgets. The RFCC are due to meet in two days' time.

The Board agreed to support the proposal to appeal both items if the Chairman and the Clerk thought it appropriate.

Mr Smith added that for the Board's information, the neighbouring RFCC (Northern area) agreed at their most recent meeting to supplement the shortfall in Highland Water claims from the Local Levy funding. The Chairman added that he would be reluctant to see funding used in this way given the works that are needed at Brownhill Sluice and would prefer to see expenditure on this rather than Highland Water. Mr Smith added that by using the Local Levy in this way, the Local Authorities that set the levy may resist payment of the levy in future, creating a circular funding issue.

RESOLVED

The Board 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 supports the packaging of 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 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.

B.1161 Environment Officers' Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	ENVIRONMENT OFFICER'S REPORT
Date:	22/01/2025	Officer Responsible:	Sofi Lloyd

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Note the updated Environmental Services Package has been specified to help ensure the Board meets minimum statutory compliance and will take effect from April 2025.
- B. Be informed that an environmental review and Biodiversity Action Plan update meeting is scheduled with the relevant Board members this spring. Please make interim provision for the new BAP to be reviewed, agreed and adopted prior to the next Board meeting.
- C. Note that the new Hedgerow Regulations 2024 prohibits the cutting of any hedge growing on agricultural land between the 1st March - 31th August inclusive.
- D. Be reminded that any non-routine maintenance including bank slip repairs or reprofiling, culvert installation or replacements, tree felling, established scrub removal and channel de-watering require environmental screening well ahead of the planned works, to ensure works are compliant, using the request form available on the MLC website: [Conservation – Middle Level](#)
- E. Be aware that you will require licenced supervision of certain works that take place around badger setts, which MLC can provide.
- F. Note that a Board Representative will be required to attend a biodiversity training day in 2025. Those who have some control over the works undertaken within the district is best placed to attend.
- G. A reminder that the Board has a culverting policy and a presumption against culverting unless no other feasible option is available: [Standing Advice – Middle Level](#).

1) Environmental Services Package Update

As per the Clerk's report, you will have seen and heard us over the previous 12 months, setting out our plans and reasoning for focussing, updating and re-defining the range of services that we provide to IDBs across and beyond the Middle Level. This will take time and our ambition is to have a catalogue defined and ready to implement on 1st April 2026.

However, within all our service provision it is ecological and environmental compliance that carries greatest risk to Boards, Board Members, Board employees, the Middle Level Commissioners and their staff. A step-change in service is overdue and we have been building towards this over the last two-years as reflected in the 2024/25 fee adjustment. Therefore, we plan to launch the new Environmental Services Package in 2025/26, as this will help IDBs to begin to significantly improve and evidence their environment compliance and delivery straight away. This also ensures that the Middle Level Commissioners are not under-writing other IDBs environmental responsibilities.

For the Boards where services from the Middle Level Commissioners will be discontinued from 1st April 2026, please use information in this letter to help scope, define, compare and negotiate the environmental services you'll require from your new supplier(s). The Service Package from us through 2025/26 will enable and facilitate the transition.

Background

Historically, IDBs have made a small contribution towards the MLC Environment Officers' salary to access ecological and environmental advice and guidance if required, in a mostly re-active manner. There has been little definition around what services have been included.

However, protecting and improving biodiversity and the environment are higher than ever on the political agenda, and the Government is looking for strong and proactive environmental delivery from Public Bodies to contribute towards their own challenging statutory environmental targets. As such, legislation and scrutiny has strengthened significantly around how IDBs deliver their statutory environmental duties. This is demonstrated by the recent changes to the information Defra requests via the IDB1 report.

Also, the general public is nowadays much better informed and aware of the state of nature and have more confidence in challenging IDBs about their environmental delivery and compliance. For these reasons, it is more important than ever for IDBs to be able to evidence how they have considered the environment when determining their approaches to flood risk and water level management.

Inevitably, this has meant that IDBs now require greater support to meet and evidence their statutory environmental duties. There has also been a growth in demand for suitably capable and qualified ecologists and the market hasn't kept pace with the demand, therefore salaries have increased similarly to other in-demand professional services. This also reflects that these days ecologists also take personal liability, thus if something goes wrong on their watch then, notwithstanding the responsibility and prosecution risk for IDB Board members, they can also be 'struck-off', a bit like doctors. They therefore need to be reassured about who they are working for and the associated commitment to compliance of the organisation.

Going forward

As outlined at the Chairs meeting in December 2024, we have developed an Environmental Service Package that aims to support IDBs to achieve minimum statutory environmental compliance. The details of the new package are set out below:

Environmental Services Package

Ref:	Category:	Details:	Days Equivalent:
1.	General Consultancy <i>(inc. retained service)</i>	Up to 2 days general consultancy which can be used for: • Screening and assessment of non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process. • Preliminary habitat and species surveys & reporting* • Ad-hoc advice and guidance. • Initial advice & communications for pollution incidents • INNS identification and advice. • Biodiversity Action Plan BAP ditch survey & reporting**	2
2.	Environmental Compliance Health Checking	• One environmental review with MLC Env. & Ecol. staff per year & subsequent reporting. • Review must include budget setting & expenditure recording for reporting to Defra (IDB1). • Review & assessment of proposed annual programme of works prior to Board approval. • BAP report & review for Board.	1.25
3.	Planning Ecology Services	• Up to 1 day for consent applications advice & guidance^ • Over 1 day will be charged on a time and materials basis. This includes responses to Local Plans and Strategies on the IDBs behalf.	1
4.	Keeping up-to-date	• Communication of relevant updates in policy, legislation, regulation and best practice.	1

5.	Training	Attendance for up to 2 candidates at 1 environmental training day per year.	1
Total:			6.25 days p.a.
Cost (2025/26)			£2,375
Notes: *Any surveys or mitigations that follow on from preliminary surveys, including licenced work such as water vole displacement, will be charged on a time and materials basis or can be contracted out if MLC staff are fully booked. ** Any unused consultancy balance can be used to cover the recommended annual 1-day BAP ditch survey, with any shortfall charged separately. If any pre-works surveys (ESRs) are undertaken in the year, they will be extended so that they count as the BAP ditch survey for efficiency. ^ For activity not rechargeable to developers/consent applicants. Unused category balances can be used to cover shortfalls in other categories within the financial year as mutually agreed. Unused balances cannot be carried forward outside the financial year but its use can be discussed with MLC with potential for it to be used to contribute towards assisting the IDB to progress a BAP objective instead if capacity allows. For IDBs who also contract operational services from MLC (via Morgan Lakey, Operations Manager), there will be a 16% reduction in fees, reflective of the efficiency gained from being able to integrate your environmental compliance procedures into our operational processes and communicate freely with your other service providers, taking the annual charge down to £1995 (2025/26).			

We are confident that the above service provision will deliver the range of support that is most frequently requested and required by IDBs and reflects what is necessary to achieve and demonstrate minimum environmental compliance.

However, the minimum service package is not exhaustive and is not all-inclusive, therefore additional ad-hoc consultancy, charged on a time and materials basis will still be available if needed and where MLC staff capacity allows. This could include:

- Supervision of Licenced CL27 drainage operations over a badger sett
- Licenced protected species activities including water vole displacements and badger sett disturbance / closures etc.
- Habitat creation or enhancement consultancy and habitat condition assessments
- Invasive species control

Where we have insufficient capacity to deliver additional consultancy, we will be able to advise on your selection of third-party supplier and provide them with advice, however the IDB would take on the client role and be the organisation commissioning the supplier, overseeing their delivery and performance.

Benefits of a service provided by MLC

Our commitment is that our fees will remain not for profit and will be very competitive compared with peer IDBs and those of qualified external profit-making environmental consultants.

It is our intention that from 1st April 2025, the service package fees will be charged. For IDBs who also contract their operational services from us via Morgan Lakey, there will be a 16% reduction in fees, reflective of the efficiency gained from being able to integrate your environmental compliance procedures into our operational processes and communicate freely with your other service providers, taking the annual charge down to £1995.

IDB ecology and the IDB industry is quite niche (e.g. bespoke ecological and environmental licenses and permits). Our ecologists specialise in and represent the local and national IDB industry interests and challenge local and national policy where it is not enabling of our work. We have strength of voice in representing the largest number of IDBs in the country. An example of this is the successful legal challenge made to Natural England last year to clarify and amend the conditions within the IDB-specific badger licence (CL27) to make

it more enabling of our routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This was not something that ADA, our national representative was able to progress for us, despite the implications for IDBs nationally. Our ecologists also hold multiple IDB-relevant protected species licences and can carry out licenced activities most commonly required by IDBs for a much-reduced cost compared to an external ecological consultancy.

There are an increasing number of funding opportunities available for a wide range of environmental improvements, including those which could be of benefit to IDBs. This includes biodiversity net gain funding, peat conservation and developer contributions such as Section 106 funding. Many of these require use of local, regional and national networks, personal relationships and partnerships, along with a landscape scale view. We provide this as we invest in it to benefit the Middle Level Commissioners. We therefore can help IDBs to be better placed and more competitive to access such funding by evidencing their experience and competence in delivering positive outcomes for biodiversity in a consistent way and in partnership with other local environmental managers.

Some of the benefits you will have received to date from the ecology and environmental services department are not always visible and would be difficult for an external consultancy to replicate in the same efficient manner. A lot of work has taken place in the background to significantly improve the way that you can evidence your environmental compliance. This has included:

- Assessment of all relevant consent applications on behalf of many IDBs to ensure their statutory duties in relation to the environment are discharged and evidenced. This sometimes includes site visits, meetings and reports. It also includes the development and publication of new pre-application environmental guidance for consent applicants, for all IDBs.
- Influencing and contributing towards national, regional and local policy and strategy development. This includes wildlife licencing, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which IDBs have a statutory duty to consider, Local Plans, Fens Reservoir planning and Environmental Stewardship options which will benefit IDBs.
- New templates, processes and services available to all IDBs to help them deliver and evidence their environmental compliance in relation to non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process.
- Development and launch of compliant standard operating procedures for routine works including flail mowing and desilting. Associated training provided to a number of IDB contractors.
- A retained ecological consultancy service (which you may have chosen not to use)
- Monitoring, influencing and communicating legislative changes that affect IDBs such as badger licenses and Hedgerow Regulations
- A scheduled environmental review and BAP refresh visit (the BAP is required to deliver an IDBs statutory biodiversity duty)

We hope that this has provided you with sufficient information regarding the new service package from 1st April 2025. We appreciate that the step-change in fee may not be universally well received by Board Members that are less engaged and aware of their personal and collective environmental liabilities and risks. The Ecology and Environmental Services team are keen to meet with you to discuss this further as part of your scheduled environmental review in the coming weeks and months.

We will work on the premise that your Board will opt in and engage with the Environmental Service Package. Indeed, it's success and your compliance requires a two-way relationship and input.

You may choose to benchmark this package against other service providers and opt-out. If so, please feel free to use the information above to secure comparable quotes. You will also need to bear in mind the following:

- The additional Board members responsibilities and associated training and expertise required to become an intelligent client in commissioning ecological and environmental services. You need to know what service you are asking for and what standards are required.
- Alternative suppliers will likely still require inputs from Middle Level Commissioners staff which will be billed at an hourly rate and liaising with alternative suppliers may impact the cost, timeliness and quality of other services we provide your Board.
- Alternative suppliers will need to consider how they invest in the IDB sector locally, regionally and nationally and the myriad of partnership activity there is within and around the Middle Level.

Your clerk will need to be reassured that any alternative service provider will support and enable your environmental compliance to report on your behalf to Defra with due confidence.

We commit to reviewing the Service Package both qualitatively and quantitatively as it beds-in to ensure continued value for money for the IDBs and the Middle Level Commissioners.

2) The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024

In May 2024, Defra announced The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 which put the baseline for hedgerow management practices into law, and replaced the regulation of management previously provided for via cross compliance. The Regulations require:

- a 2-metre buffer strip, measured from the centre of a hedgerow, where a green cover must be established and maintained. Also, no cultivation or the application of pesticides or fertilisers should take place within this buffer strip;
- a hedgerow cutting ban from 1 March to 31 August (inclusive).

These Regulations apply to any hedgerow growing on land used for agriculture if that hedgerow has:

- a continuous length of 20 metres or more; or
- a continuous length of less than 20 metres and, at each end, meets (whether by intersection or junction) another hedgerow.

Please advise your workforce / contractors of the change and programme such works to take place within the compliant period: [Hedgerow management rules: cutting and trimming - GOV.UK](#)

3) Licensing of IDB works around badger setts.

Previously, MLC had planned to roll out training and licence administration services to enable all IDBs to access the CL27 Badger Licence and to conduct their routine and periodic maintenance work compliantly around badger setts. However there were some issues with licence returns in 2023 which highlighted some regional variation in the regulation and enforcement of CL27 licence requirements within Natural England, and some developing impractical licence requirements. MLC and representatives from 3 other IDBs made a successful legal challenge to Natural England regarding the issues and have secured some positive changes to the licence which are more enabling of our low-risk routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This has removed the need for all IDBs to hold their own badger licences (although they may wish to do so anyway) and makes it much easier for MLC to continue to provide qualified and licenced supervision of works where necessary. Any work that carries any risk of damaging a badger sett or disturbing a badger within a sett, even if the risk is deemed to be small, is still licensable and MLC should be contacted for further advice where such works are planned. This includes desilting over or near to a badger sett. Where there is

uncertainty, if any works are planned within 30m of a badger sett, please contact MLC for advice and guidance. Please see the updated CL27 licence on-line for full details of activities that are likely to be licensable: [Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes \(CL27\) - GOV.UK](#)

4) Improved advice and guidance provision:

- a) We have developed some extended pre-application advice and guidance for consent applicants to help them understand what environmental considerations they need to make before submitting an application to us. This includes helping them to secure the correct ecological advice and what ecological assessments they need to submit with their application. This will help applicants to avoid delays in us processing their application until such information is received. It has already reduced the number of queries and frequently asked questions that we have had to respond to. It also helps to ensure more efficient delivery of the IDBs statutory responsibilities regarding the environment that are associated with consenting the work of others in and around IDB channels. Please take a look on the website for more information.
- b) We have welcomed new ecological resource at MLC who will be assisting with delivering the new service package to IDBs. **Abigail Leach** has a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience that she has brought with her, most recently from working at the Broads Authority, and is very well regarded in the industry. Abigail has already revised and updated the **biosecurity policy** and will be launching it later this year at the next IDB training event.

Author Name: Sofi Lloyd

Role: Ecology & Environmental Services Manager

Hannah Parish declared an interest in this item.

The Chairman reported to the Board that he proposed to review the Environmental Service provision. As the written Environment Officers' report details, MLC are increasing the cost of the Service Provision, proposing that for this Board this increases from £700 to £1100 for the year 2024/25, and to £2,375 pa from 2025/26. The Chairman advised that he has already objected to this change, and that has reached an agreement with MLC that no charges will be made for 2024/25 and proposes that the Service Provision is moved away from MLC from 1st April 2025.

The Chairman has been in discussion with Helen Parish and has agreed that Helen will provide ecological services to the Board from 1st April 2025, at an agreed hourly rate. A meeting has been planned at the end of March to facilitate a handover between Helen and Sofi Lloyd, MLC's Ecology and Environmental Services Manager.

The Board agreed with the proposal and asked the Chairman to progress the work as he sees fit.

Ms Hannah Parish abstained from voting.

Mrs Martin reminded the Board of the content of the Environment Officers report, and the Chairman added that there is a legal requirement for the Board to engage in these works, and that the BAP meeting would be held at the same time as the handover meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Report be approved.

That Ecological Services will be provided by Helen Parish from 1st April 2025, and MLC Ecological Services will terminate on the same date.

B.1162 Chairman's Items

The Chairman gave a verbal report. Following on from the notice given by MLC to withdraw services from 1st April 2026, he has been meeting with the Ely Group of Internal Drainage Boards, and the Water Management Alliance on the Board's behalf to discuss future provisions. He reported that he had been disappointed with the Ely Groups timely responses to queries, and that he and the Chairman of the Haddenham Level IDB are currently awaiting more information from the Ely Group.

The Board agreed with the Chairman's continuing approach to this matter.

B.1163 Consulting Engineers' Reports

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Tuesday 11 February 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.**

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 MLC could provide. Given the increasing frequency of complex cases where Boards consider there may be a need for regulation and enforcement dependent 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.

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 a provision for this within our existing charging structure.

Please refer to item 4 in the Clerks report.

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.

The revised NPPF constitutes a significant departure from previous versions with 810 changes. It was issued during December and its contents are currently being reviewed.

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.

2.4 ***Demolition of existing dwelling and garage and erection of retirement living development comprising of six flats with associated parking and landscaping at 63 Middle Watch, Swavesey (MLC Ref. 360/PL/425 & 432)***

A discharge consent was issued in April 2024 for an attenuated discharge into a watercourse to the east of the development, after the Board requested that no discharge was to be made via the AWS foul sewer in Middle Watch. The point of discharge was subsequently amended to a piped system

further east, which the Chairman agreed to be a more suitable proposal. The amended consent was issued in December 2024.

Slate Hall Farm - Lolworth Developments (MLC Ref. 360/PL/384)

Further to previous Meeting Reports the fees incurred by both Stantec and the Middle Level Commissioners have been paid by the applicant and a copy of Stantec's Technical Note has been issued to the applicant's consultant, MJM Consulting Engineers Ltd.

East West Rail (MLC Ref. 360/PL/384)

Following a discussion with the Boards Chair, concern was expressed at the last Meeting of the C & P FloW about the potential adverse impacts that the proposed station at Cambourne may cause by stimulating interest in additional development, such as a Station Quarter, and the adverse impacts on Uttons Drove WRC and the larger Swavesey Drain system.

This concern was also expressed to the Planning Inspectorate in response to an enquiry about Scoping Opinion associated with the Development Consent Order (DCO).

NB. A DCO is a statutory instrument that grants development consent, essentially an Outline planning application, and other permissions for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) in England.

Northstowe Phase 3B (MLC Ref. 360/4/Phase 3/05)

Following a request from the Boards Chair enquires were sent to relevant parties requesting an update on the current position.

In this respect Homes England advised that:

"Phase 3B was initially seen as the final phase of Northstowe, however Homes England is reviewing whether there is any scope to bring this phase of development forward to help deliver Government objectives of accelerating delivery of the new town. It is not possible to be categorical about when development may commence but I would not expect this to be before 2027."

The Principal Planner (Strategic Sites) at GCSP responded:

"An application for the approval of Reserved Matters has not yet been submitted so it seems unlikely that development will commence soon."

2.5 Planning Updates & Consultations

The Commissioners have responded on the Board's behalf concerning the following:

A. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

Planning Service Consultation Matrix – In response to a query the GCSP were advised of the current planning related contact address/point of contact; the service provided; the use of planning application lists/Notices; and the process advising on the Boards requirements.

B. Cambridge Water Drought Management Plan (DMP)

Cambridge Water are commencing the review and development of its new DMP, prior to submission to Defra following a period of formal public consultation and has sought the views of several stakeholders for consideration on the development of a new plan and approach to drought management.

In general, the Plan does not directly affect the Board but a response was made which amongst other items referred to Drought Triggers, Temporary Use Bans, Bulk Transfers and Communications with customers.

3. **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood and Water (C&P FloW) Partnership**

In addition to the items discussed above, the following issues of interest to the Board have been raised:

A. Great Ouse at Swavesey

Following an enquiry from the SCDC representative, the Environment Agency advised that the impacts of the failure of Brownhill Stauch are negligible but that a study is in progress.

B. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

Given that a year has passed since the workshop and no meaningful correspondence or outcomes appear to have been received, the Commissioners requested an update on this programme. Unfortunately, the Commissioners were not able to provide a representative for this meeting but no update has been provided by other means.

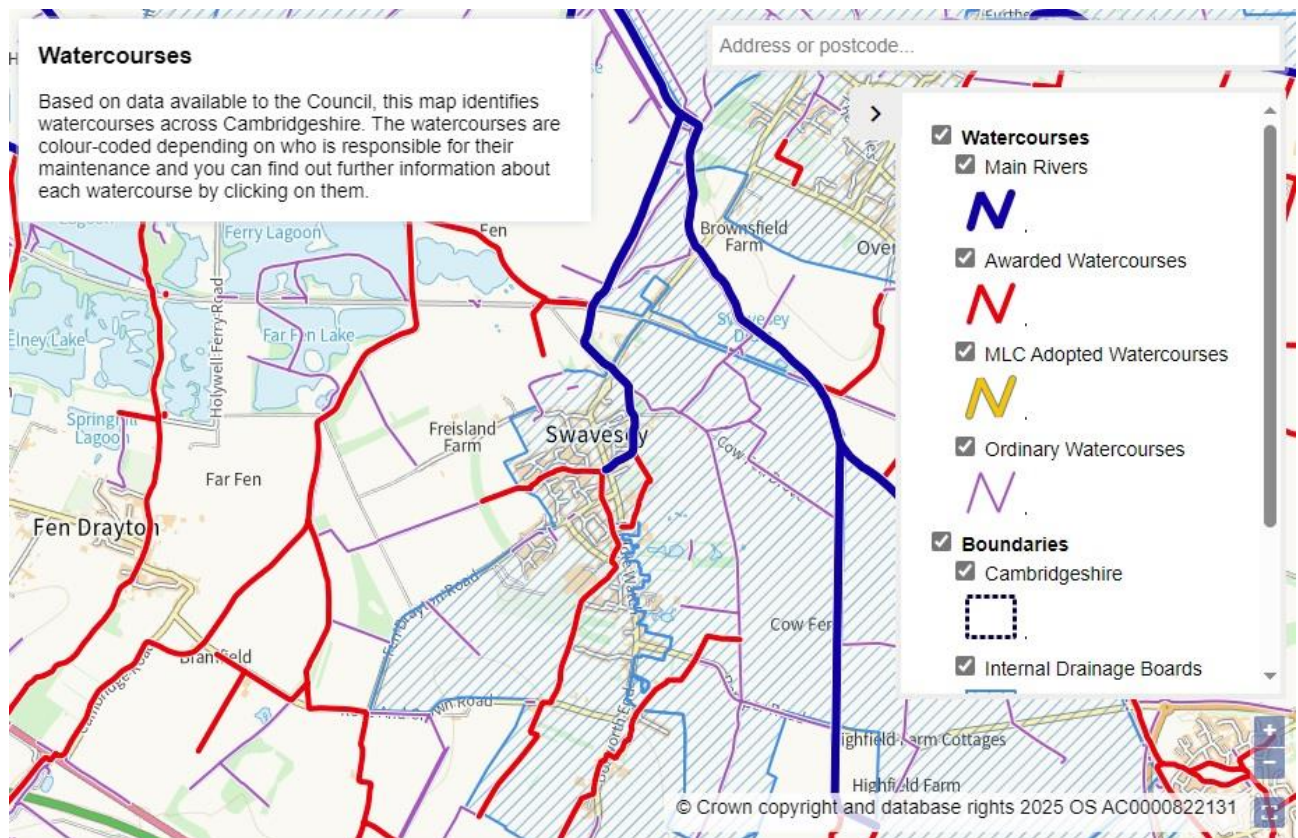
The following outputs have been produced:

1. Further copies of the Community Flood and Water newsletter have been issued. You can view previous editions and subscribe to receive the newsletter automatically at [Community flood action programme | Cambridgeshire County Council](#).
2. The Flood Risk team has published a Watercourse Mapping Tool - [Watercourse management | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The tool was driven by feedback from local communities, landowners, and other stakeholders who wanted to understand more about watercourse responsibilities. It aims to provide a public tool that can be used to identify location of and responsibility for different watercourses. The watercourses are colour-coded depending on type/maintenance obligations and you can find out further information about each watercourse by clicking on them. The map includes the following details in Cambridgeshire:

- Ordinary watercourses
- Awarded watercourses
- Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) Adopted watercourses
- Main rivers
- Internal Drainage Board boundaries

It is acknowledged that there will be some watercourses, particularly the smaller ones, that are not yet included on the map. It is intended to expand on this map, adding more information wherever possible. If there are watercourses in your area that satisfy the definition above but are not currently included in the mapping, please contact the Flood Risk Team so that these can be discussed and added where appropriate.



Extract from the CCC Watercourse Mapping Tool showing part of the Boards area

4. Capital Programme

In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GiA) the current indication is that there will be no funding allocation within the current spending review period.

The Board is asked to decide how to proceed.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield

Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Programme

Appendix 2: List of applications since last meeting

Appendix 3: Operational Services Report

Appendix 4: Mechanical & Electrical Report

Appendix 5: MLC001: Middle Level System Flood & Drainage Infrastructure Capacity

Appendix 1

Swavesey 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
Long Causeway P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5,000.0	5000.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	40.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	45.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	45.0
	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	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
Drainage Channels														
	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	40	35	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,000	5,120
2025/26 - 10yr+ investment updated with typical pumping station replacement cost														

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	Council Ref.	Applicant	Type of Development	Location
433	S/24/00621/HFUL	Dr L Walsh & Ms M Yotava	Residence (Extension)	Whitton Close, Swavesey
434	S/24/00845/HFUL	Mr & Mrs Pepperrell	Residence (Extension)	Black Horse Lane, Swavesey
435	S/24/01024/OUT	Mrs Nicola Price	Residence (Dwelling)	Middlewatch Swavesey,
436	S/24/01211/FUL	Bidwells LLP	Equine (Stable & Barn)	Lairstall Drove, Swavesey
437	S/24/01282/HFU	Mr J Mitham	Residence (Extension)	Station Road, Swavesey
438	S/24/01910/FUL	Mr & Mrs Fleming	Residence (Replacement dwelling & barn)	Hale Road, Swavesey
439	S/24/03270/HFUL	Mr & Mrs Pepperrell	Residence (Extension)	Black Horse Lane, Swavesey
440	S/24/03266/HFUL	Jeff Day	Residence (Extension)	Black Horse Lane, Swavesey
441	S/24/01910/CONDA	GW Fleming	Residence (Replacement dwelling & barn)	Hale Road, Swavesey
442	S/24/03573/HFUL	SN Horner	Residence (Extension)	School Lane, Swavesey
443	S/24/03908/REM	Mrs N Price	Residence (Dwelling)	Middle Watch, Swavesey
444	S/24/03541/HFUL	Mr Norton	Residence (Extension)	Whitegate Close, Swavesey
445	S/24/04332/HFUL	The Team Builder (Cambridge) Ltd	Residence (Extension)	Ramper Road, Swavesey

The following applications for Byelaw Consent (to discharge to a watercourse) have been granted since the last meeting:

MLC Ref	Council Ref	Consent No	Applicant	Location	Date consent granted
425 & 432	23/01118/FUL	SW/DC/06	The Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund	Middle Watch, Swavesey	05/04/2024 Amended 17/12/2024

The following Infiltration Device applications have been acknowledged since the last meeting:

MLC Ref	Council Ref	Option 1 (Self-certification) or Option 2 (Checking Form)	Location	Date acknowledged
429	23/02161/S73	Option 2	Middlewatch, Swavesey	<u>07/06/2024</u>

There have been no Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) applications processed since the last meeting.

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES
Date:	Tuesday 11 February 2025	Officer Responsible:	Morgan Lakey

1. Environment Agency/Swavesey IDB/Middle Level Commissioners' PSCA (Public Sector Co-operation Agreement) Works Delivery - 2024 Season

Swavesey IDB and the Middle Level Commissioners were jointly tasked by the Environment Agency (EA) with delivery of a similar maintenance arrangement under the PSCA in 2024.

For their part last season, the Middle Level Commissioners provided plant, machinery and labour to undertake an herbicide application to the EA controlled watercourses and flail mowing services. A Contractors machine was utilised to undertake weed cutting throughout the district.

The EA enquired if there was an opportunity to extend the scope of the PSCA programme to include an additional area of Bank clearance works along Covell's Drain/Bank. Following a joint site inspection, the District Superintendent and MLC Engineer agreed to undertake the works, which have been programmed for completion in February.

All works undertaken under the PSCA have been completed at cost, on a fully rechargeable basis.

2. Weed Control and Drain Maintenance

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

As with previous years, there was little evidence of aquatic vegetation growth within the Board's drains in the early part of the season and following several inspections and in agreement with the Chairman, the herbicide treatments for the beginning of the year were cancelled. Further inspections in late summer revealed sporadic stands of emergent aquatic vegetation in several Board's drains. To maintain the current high standard of maintenance and in agreement with the Chairman, a late season herbicide application was carried out on the affected drains. Further inspections will continue in early spring this year and any herbicide or maintenance works will be arranged if required. A sum has been included within the estimated costs to undertake herbicide applications throughout the district again this year.

The Board's flail mowing requirements were undertaken by Lattenbury Services Ltd and, at the Chairman's/District Superintendent's request, Lattenbury will be approached to undertake the flail mowing of Board's drains again this year. A sum has been included within the estimated costs to cover this work.

As with previous years many of the Board's drain beds dried out during the summer and the watercourses were deemed to have retained their general good condition and no machine cleansing was required in the dry drains. With the Chairman's/District Superintendent's approval, a late spring/early summer joint inspection of the Board's drains will be undertaken again this year. The

inspection should highlight herbicide application requirements and give an opportunity to forward plan any other works required to maintain the Board's drains to a satisfactory standard.

Provisional sums based on previous year's machine cleansing expenditure and culvert cleansing/piling works, have been allocated within this report.

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

The estimated cost of this year's anticipated drain maintenance and weed control programme is as follows (see previous plan for locations):

£			
1)	Roundup applications to control emergent aquatic vegetation in District drains	Item Sum	1500.00
2)	Provisional Item Allow sum for machine cleansing work to Board's drains as required	Item Sum	2500.00
3)	Provisional Item Allow sum for emergency works including bank piling or culvert headwall repair works	Item Sum	1000.00
4)	Allow sum for flail mowing of District drains and hedge cutting	Item Sum	4500.00
5)	Fees for preparation and submission of report to the Board, arrangement and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works.	Item Sum	<u>750.00</u>
TOTAL			<u><u>£10,250.00</u></u>

Orders for the application of herbicides by the Middle Level Commissioners are accepted on condition that they will not be held responsible for the efficacy of any treatment.

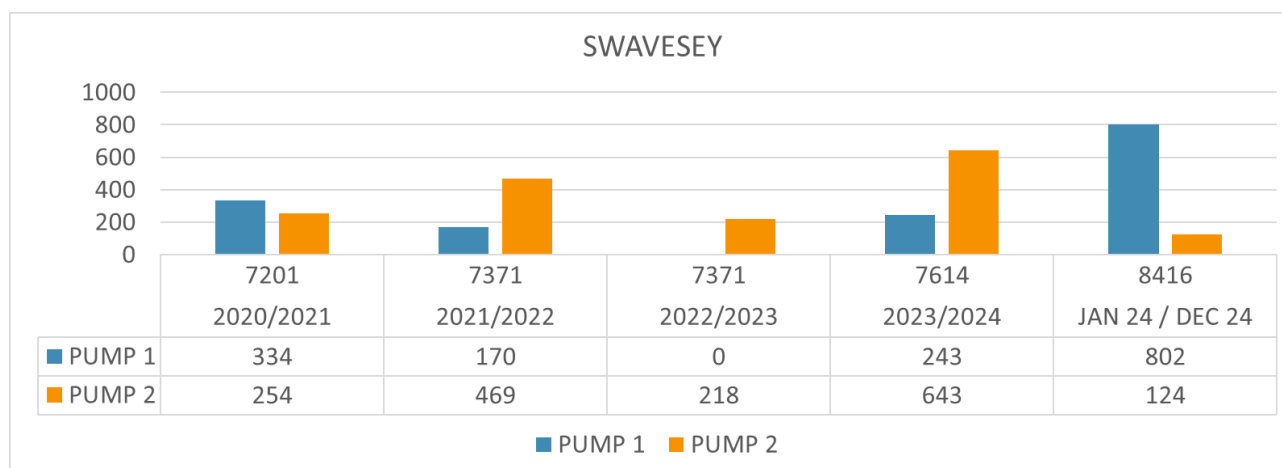
Author Name: Morgan Lakey
Role: Assistant Operations Engineer

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Tuesday 11 February 2025	Officer Responsible:	Dave Bantoft

1. M&E key messages and advice

- 1.1 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 Other than the matters described below or previously reported, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at each of the stations is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition. The station pumps, WSC and control panels are at an age where reliability is a concern.
- 1.3 The pumps control is 40 years old and would benefit from replacement, the main isolators are hard to operate and are likely to fail. A replacement panel is likely to cost in the region of £30K. The isolators may need to be changed before a new control panel is installed.
- 1.4 The weedscreen cleaner is more than 25 years old and would benefit from an overhaul which is likely to cost around £25k for the trolley and grab plus £20k for the control panel.
- 1.5 The telemetry router failed in October 2024 and was replaced by MLC Engineer with set up assistance provided by Streamline IT. Backup files stored at MLC and forwarded to Mr K Wilderspin.

2. Pumping summary



PUMP 1 HISTORY		
DATE	HOURS	
1985	0	NEW
1995	2800	PUMP MAJOR OVERHAUL
2004	5271	PUMP REMOVED AS BLOCKED - SEALS REPLACED
2010	5806	PUMP MAJOR OVERHAUL BY BEDFORD PUMPS
2023	7371	RUN HOURS AT JAN 2023
2024	7614	RUN HOURS AT JAN 2024
2024	8416	RUN HOURS AT DEC 2024

PUMP 2 HISTORY		
DATE	HOURS	
1985	0	NEW
1996	1785	PUMP MAJOR OVERHAUL
2001	2857	PUMP REMOVED AS BLOCKED - SEALS REPLACED
2011	5162	PUMP MAJOR OVERHAUL BY BEDFORD PUMPS
2023	8427	RUN HOURS AT JAN 2023
2024	9070	RUN HOURS AT JAN 2024
2024	9194	RUN HOURS AT DEC 2024

3. Inspections

- 3.1 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out during September 2024.
- 3.2 EICR Test completed in March 2024 this year.

Board	EICR Pass Date	EICR Due
Swavesey	29-Mar-2024	29-Mar-2029

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer



**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.

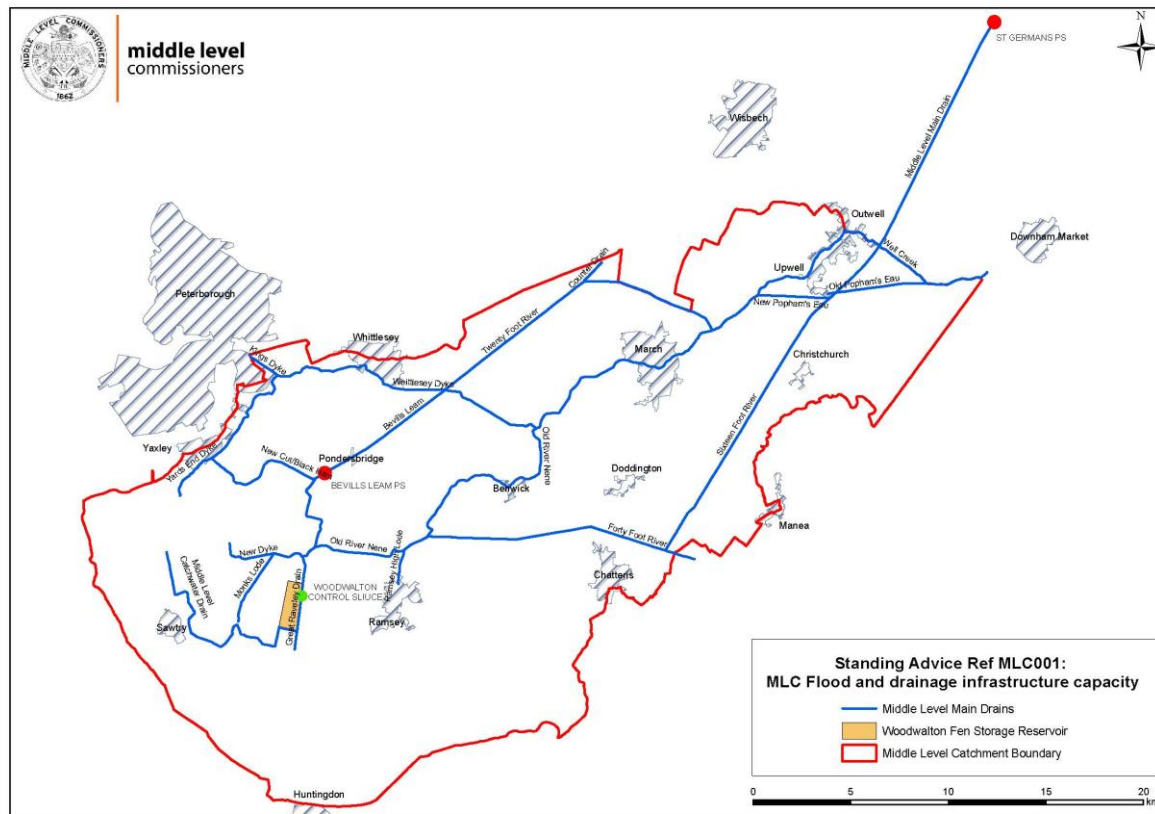
The Commissioners are, for all intents and purposes, an Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore a Risk Management Authority under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 and we have a duty to enhance the environment under the Environment Act 2021. The Commissioners also have duties and powers under 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 750km² 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

Mrs Martin drew the Board's attention to the Consulting Engineers' Report, including the Operational Services and Mechanical and Electrical Engineers' report. She advised that the reports would be taken as read and highlighted some particular items for discussion.

The proposal to introduce charges for developers following the review of a charging model was reported on, and this was discussed at length by the Board. Ms Ellington asked where any planning applications were referred to and was advised that as the Board are not a statutory consultee, the Board are not advised by the Council Planning department of any developments within the Board's area. The Chairman explained that where developments do require the developer to carry out some consultation with the Board, this is currently carried out by MLC on the Boards' behalf and generally funded by the Board. He added that the Bar Farm development resulted in an agreement with Stantec paying the Board's expenses. Ms Ellington added that Councils have been looking at a 5-year supply of land, but the change in Government has resulted in a decision that South Cambs must increase the development land available by a considerable amount, and that the village envelope criteria that had previously been used to control development would be much harder to implement. They are expecting the Dairy Farm development to come forward and this will directly affect this Board. The Chairman added that the changes proposed by MLC should help the Board in these circumstances. Ms Warren-Green agreed, adding that the pressure from the Government's development requirements will put a squeeze on timing, speeding up development. All agreed that they were surprised by the fierceness of

the transition period, especially with the accepted water issues in the area. The Chairman concluded that development in the Cambridge area would affect this Board more than any other.

The Board acknowledged the introduction of interim charges.

The Board were reminded of the MLC's Standing Advice Note, which was issued to local Councils and the Environment Agency in May of 2024. The Board were invited to consider issuing similar advice notes for its District. The Chairman added that if all IDBs in the area issue similar advice, the Planning authorities would need to listen. Mr Smith asked if there had been any further reports from the study of Uttons Drove WRC, but the Chairman advised that the Board had heard nothing. The Board agreed to the development of standing advice for this Board.

Mrs Martin drew the Boards attention to the larger planning applications as listed in the report. She also advised the Board of the understanding that GiA funding is unlikely to be available for the next year. She drew the Board's attention to the Capital improvement programme for 2025/26, which shows £30k to replacement control equipment and £5k pumping station compound improvements, plus £45k for weedscreen replacement in the 2026/27 financial year. The Board were asked to note the estimated costs for drain maintenance and weed control from the Operational Services report, and that the Mechanical and Electrical report again reminds the Board of the GiA funding query and invites the Board to consider development of an investment plan.

The report reminds the Board that the pumps are ageing, and main isolators are hard to operate, and that a new control panel is needed. In addition, the weedscreen cleaner and control panel are due an overhaul. The Chairman advised that he had been in contact with Dave Bantoft, the MLC M&E Engineer, who had advised that he is seriously concerned about the isolator switches and that both switches need replacement, which would cost £2-4k. Mr Bantoft has advised that these are not switched off until they are replaced. A full replacement of the panel is likely to cost in the region of £20-30k, but as a minimum something needs to be done with the isolator switches. The Chairman questioned if it would be sensible to spend £2-4k on the something that may be replaced as a whole package in the near future. Ms Parish added her concern that there are a lot of things that need doing, to which the Chairman added that he had been told that if something went wrong with the electrics it would be possible to make some temporary fixes to keep the pumps running, but if there was an issue with the pumps themselves, the Board would be in trouble. He has been advised that it would be most appropriate to replace the pumps with like for like, and that any changes to the pump designs would require compliance with the Eel Regulations which would add additional costs. However, he has not asked for any budget costs for this work. Ms Ellington asked that as equipment does not get any cheaper, can the Board consider doing something soon, but the Chairman advised that it is unlikely that and GiA funding would become available soon. Mr Smith added that the Strategic Study had been deferred, and this had delayed projects.

RESOLVED

The Board acknowledge the proposed approach to introduce interim charges for responding to applicant's questions.

The Board wish to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instructs the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

B.1164 Health & Safety

Ms Parish advised that a meeting had been held with Cope Safety Management, but that the written report had not yet been received. However, she advised that nothing was identified as requiring immediate action.

B.1165 District Superintendents' Report

The Chairman gave a verbal report in his capacity of District Superintendent.

Following the previous Health and Safety visit, it was identified that a number of boards required replacement on the rack platform, and the Board had put budget provision of £3k in place. However, the materials alone would cost £3k. It was suggested that Lattenbury be approached to provide a quotation for the works, but no response was received. The Superintendent then looked to repair the worst of the boards himself and found that 3 needed immediate replacement. These were ordered along with 3 spares at a cost of around £1500. The repairs have been carried out and the 3 spare boards have been stored.

The Superintendent reported that the drains are currently in a reasonable condition, although Mr Stroude advised that the culvert at Cow Fen between the footpath from Rampton Road to Cow Fen Road is blocked and between points 24 and 20 is silted up. The Superintendent advised his disappointment about this as the culvert had been cleaned in the previous year. However, he agreed to add this to the drain clearing programme. Mr Stroude reported that where the ditches have been flailed upstream, the debris has washed downstream and been caught in the culvert, and nothing except water can get through. The Superintendent reminded the Board that only £1,000 had been budgeted for drain clearance and that this sum would not stretch far.

The Superintendent advised that with the MLC staff, all of the PCSA works for the previous year had been completed. This year the EA have asked if the Board would do the bushing on the riverbank under the same agreement and therefore at no cost to the Board. The Superintendent added that he is conscious he is not as young as he was and that he has been very grateful to Ms Parish and Mr Stroude for all their assistance. He has spoken to the Chairman of the Haddenham Levels IDB and agreed that if required their District Officer could come in and assist the Board but advised the Board that this would be at a cost to the Board. With this in mind the District Superintendent asked the Board to consider giving him an allowance to allow him to commission works without needing a full Board meeting to agree. Haddenham Levels District Officer has access to a wheeled excavator which would assist this Board's maintenance works. Ms Parish agreed that it is good to have access to someone who is knowledgeable of this Board's assets available, and the Board agreed that an allowance would be considered.

The District Superintendent was thanked for all that he does for the Board.

B.1166 Governance

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	10
Meeting:	SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	GOVERNANCE
Date:	Tuesday 11 th February 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 Whittings 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 valuations
- G. Review and approve the updated Policies 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
- M. Continue with a limited assurance review approach.

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

- 1.1 The AGAR provides the framework by which the governance of the Board is assessed. The Board's last AGAR is available on its page via www.middlelevel.gov.uk
- 1.2 The Board/Commissioners to consider:
 - the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 1)
 - the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 2)
- 1.3 The Board are reminded that Whittings LLP were appointed as internal auditor for a five-year period commencing 1st April 2023 (financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28).
- 1.4 The Board is asked to act on the advice of the Auditor within its decision making.

2. Internal Controls

- 2.1 Within the financial operations at the Middle Level offices there are a series of controls in place to ensure the segregation of duties, so as far as practical within a small workforce, that no one person has control of a single operation from start to finish. The [Internal Controls](#) are available via the website within the 'Governance' section on the Board's page.
- 2.2 Note the Financial Code for the Board is included within its 'Governance Documents' also available on its page via www.middlelevel.gov.uk

- 2.3 The Board needs to ensure there is adequate separation of duties within its running and decision making. Members are asked to refresh themselves as to the Member Code of Conduct (available within the Governance Documents on the Board's webpage) and ensure their declarations of interests are clear and up-to-date.
- 2.4 If a Board Member (or their business) undertakes contracted work (or bids for such work) for the Board it is recommended that they be excluded from any decision making as a matter of course and that appropriate contractual arrangements are in place.
- 2.5 If the Member also has a lead role for the Board (eg Chairman/Vice Chairman) then it is important that the Board puts in place safeguards to ensure a separation of duties, particularly being clear on who is acting as lead client for the contractor.

3. 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:

- a) **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.**
- b) **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.**
- c) **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.**
- d) **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.**

- e) 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 The insured values for the Board's assets are detailed below:

SWAVESEY IDB INSURED VALUE OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS

	As At 1st April 2025
High Causeway Pumping Station	<u>1,000,000.00</u> 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, which includes the need to log offers of gifts and hospitality & Financial Regulations policies (Appendix 3).

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 assertion 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.

10. Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

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

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Appendix 1 Annual Return 2023/2024

Appendix 2 Audit Report 2023/2024

Appendix 3 Anti-Bribery & Financial Regulations Policies

Swavesey 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 18 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015 /234)

- 1 The Audit of accounts for the Swavesey 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 Swavesey Internal Drainage Board

The Clerk
Swavesey Internal Drainage Board
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 6AH

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: 4th September 2024

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

SWAVESEY-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) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	☐	☐	☒

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

12/06/2024 17/06/2024 28/06/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

WHITINGS LLP

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

R. REECH - WHITINGS LLP

Date

28/06/2024

*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:

SWAVESEY-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 means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
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 not all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

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

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

25/06/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

B.1154

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

Chair

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

SWAVESEY-INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	89,311	95,367	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	21,327	23,267	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	7,308	11,213	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	22,579	39,638	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	95,367	90,209	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	96,521	107,893	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	513,000	513,000	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


11/06/2024

Date

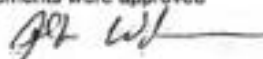
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

25/06/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

AG 11/06/2024

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

Swavesey Internal Drainage Board – DB0108

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

Date

31/08/2024



Fenland House, 158 Hestonker 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.

PARTNERS

Christopher D Rogers FCA
Ian G Langer FCA
Andrew B Rand FCA

Tina J Hunt FCA
Kathryn Dyer FCA
Amanda Newman FCA

Paul H J Rouse FCA
Jonathan P Price FCA
Nicholas Ridgway FCA

Debbie G Martin ACA
Rebecca Lewis ACA

ASSOCIATES

Robert A Alcock FCA
Scott B Selwyn FCA
Bernard R Wilby ACA

Michael Riddinger FCA
James King ACA
Robert Deakin CIO FCA

PRACTICE MANAGER

Jane T. Peadar

Whitings LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales, number 11331018. The above listed Partners and Whitings Capital Ltd are the members of Whitings LLP. This registered office is: Greenwood House, Greenwood Court, Station Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP12 7DY. Registered to undertake audit work in the UK, regulated for a range of investment business activities and licensed to carry out the reserved legal activity of non-solicitor law practice in England and Wales by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

BURY ST EDMUNDS | ELY | KING'S LYNN | MARCH | MILDENHALL | PETERBOROUGH | RAMSEY | ST IVES | ST NEOTS | WISBECH

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 taken 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 payrollising 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 stamp 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.

Client comment:

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.

Client comment:

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

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

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 unrepresented 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:

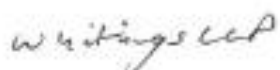
This area is designated as an attenuation pond, holding surface water to discharge at a controlled rate into the District System. The valuation takes into account its use and therefore limited value. In view of this and to maintain value for money for the Board it was agreed by the officers of the Board 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Whittings LLP".

Whittings 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 or 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.

Swavesey IDB

Administered by:



middle level
commissioners

Governance **Financial Regulations 2025 – 2035**

References in this Code to “the Clerk” shall be a reference to such officers of the Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) as may from time to time undertake the relevant work or functions on behalf of the Board and references to “the Chairman” shall also include the Vice Chairman.

A SUMMARY

1. These Financial Regulations should be read in conjunction with the Board’s, Standing Orders, Regulations as to proceedings, Schedule of Reserved Matters and Scheme of Delegations to ensure that its resources are properly managed, accounted for and controlled.
2. The level at which decisions relating to the finances and functions of the Board are to be taken are as set out in the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations
3. The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining adequate and effective controls and procedures in the manner and format he/she considers to be best and shall where appropriate, prepare additional rules of procedure or guidance, supplementary to these Regulations.
4. The Clerk shall be responsible for setting up and maintaining the financial and management accounting/reporting systems, processes, procedures and coding lists. Such systems shall be properly documented and shall not be changed without the approval of the Clerk. The Head of Finance (Treasurer) to the Middle Level Commissioners shall be the Board’s Responsible Financial Officer, as defined in and for the purposes of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The MLC finance team will support the Head of Finance in providing this function.
5. The Clerk shall advise the Board and carry out the Boards instructions in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and for ensuring that value for money is provided.
6. The Clerk shall ensure that the Board’s Financial Statements for each Financial Year ending 31 March are prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities and, so far as may be appropriate, the Practitioners’ Guide to the Preparation of Financial Statements for IDBs (and any subsequent requirements) applicable at the time of preparation.
7. The Clerk shall ensure that the Board considers and approves its Financial Statements for a Financial Year in accordance with the provisions of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
8. All employees and members have a responsibility for health and safety, compliance with policies and legislation, procedures and codes of practice, for the general security of the Board’s property, and, for economy efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.
9. All members and employees shall familiarise themselves with and observe the Schedule of Reserved Matters, the Scheme of Delegations and these Regulations.

10. Failure to comply with any aspect of these Regulations may result in disciplinary action being taken against the individual(s) concerned. Serious breaches by Board Members may result in action being taken against them, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

B SCHEME OF BUDGET DELEGATION

1. The Clerk shall be a budget holder and is responsible to the Board for the overall management of the Board's Finances, the Expenditure Estimates and all Budgets.
2. The Board's Consulting Engineer is responsible to the Board to the extent that he/she is so authorised by the Board and is allocated funds for the purpose of preparing and managing the Board's Capital Works Budget.
3. The Board's Consulting Engineer and/or the Chairman and/or the District Officer are responsible to the Board to the extent that they are so authorised by the Board and are allocated funds for the purpose of preparing and managing where applicable the Board's Maintenance Works Budget, the Plant/Labour Operating Accounts, the Plant Renewals Budget, the Stock Control Account and the Rechargeable Works Budget and any other matter in respect of which they are authorised under the Scheme of Delegations.
4. Other than as set out in the Scheme of Delegations or where authorised to do so by a resolution of the Board, no other person shall be empowered to enter contracts on behalf of the Board unless authorised to do so by a budget holder. Nor shall any other person commit the Board to a particular course of action or provide an undertaking or assurance to any third party without the prior consent of the Clerk and/or Responsible Finance Officer and/or the Chairman.
5. No budget holder other than the Chairman shall procure goods and services, charge, allocate or otherwise commit expenditure against a budget that they have no budgetary responsibility for.

C MANAGING BUDGETS & REPORTING

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for preparing the Board's Estimates/Budgets, for monitoring income and expenditure during the course of the year, for alerting the Chairman to any material variances, and, for providing budget holders with the financial information that they require and assisting them as necessary to enable them to properly prepare/manage their budgets. The Clerk shall further ensure that the Board are presented with and consider the proposed expenditure estimates in order that the Rates and Special Levies can be determined for each financial year in due time in accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991 and it is the individual budget holder's responsibility to provide him/her with their detailed budgets and supporting information in order that this may be done.
2. Any drainage rate refunds due for whatever reason shall be approved by the Clerk prior to being paid or otherwise accounted for.
3. All correcting journal entries shall always be authorised and approved by the Clerk.
4. The Clerk shall ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for alerting the Chairman immediately should a Local Authority fail to make their Special Levy payment at the agreed time, or where Drainage Rates are outstanding following reminder. The Clerk and Chairman will agree a course of action and whether a special meeting of the Board is required.
5. Every budget holder is responsible for seeking to ensure that actual expenditure on each of their budgets does not exceed the budget as approved and shall regularly monitor income/expenditure to this end. Budget holders shall, whenever practicable, get approval for material adverse variances to

any of their budgets that are anticipated. Approval shall be sought in accordance with the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations.

6. The Clerk may convene a meeting of the Board or a Committee. The Chairman or any 3 other Board members shall also have the power to convene such a meeting.
7. The Consulting Engineer shall prepare a Report for each Board meeting at which such items appear on the agenda detailing amongst other things the progress made on approved capital schemes in respect of which he/she has been instructed during the reporting period as compared to approved budgeted costs, and, when appropriate, will propose new capital schemes for consideration. Such Report will also detail any maintenance work which he/she has organised for the Board during the reporting period and the cost of such work.
8. The Clerk shall also prepare Financial Report(s) for each Board meeting and, shall prepare any other management accounting/financial report that may be required by the Board.
9. In considering its financial health, estimates, rates and investment strategy, the Board will consider as a minimum:
 - I. Whether it has sufficient General Fund Reserves to cater for above average annual expenditure due to, for example, excessive pumping or urgent works.
 - II. Whether it is utilising and planning for use of any Development Charges account appropriately for future capital works.
 - III. Whether it has sufficient Asset Improvement/Future Works budget taking account of its asset base, asset age/reliability, capital programme requirements and likely grant eligibility.
 - IV. Its financial ability to secure and pay off a suitable value Public Works Loan to bridge any gap between its Asset Improvement/Future Works budget and likely value of works.

D PURCHASING GOODS & SERVICES (INCLUDING PLANT)

1. Unless otherwise authorised by the Board by resolution or required under the terms of any formal procedures relating to such work, budget holders shall always comply with the following procedures when procuring goods and services.

Quotations/Tenders will be sought as follows, other than in emergency situations where approved buying groups or agreed contractors/consultants/suppliers for a particular area of work or expertise have been appointed or are used or where approved service level agreements are in force. These threshold amounts may be amended from time to time by resolution of the Board:

<u>Estimated Value of Goods/Services Quotes/</u>	<u>Quotation/Tenders to be sought</u>
<= £5,000	No quotations/tenders required
> £5,000 and <= £10,000	Obtain 1 written quotation
> £10,000	Obtain 3 quotations or 3 tenders as appropriate

2. The budget holder shall be responsible for ensuring that quotations or tenders are sought when required by the above table. Where it is not possible to get the required quotations or tenders, the Chairman's written approval must be obtained prior to awarding any contract.
3. Any agreed contractors, consultants or suppliers list shall be maintained and kept up to date by the Clerk.
4. A budget holder must never agree to permit a third party to provide them with goods/services where tenders or quotations are required without obtaining a copy of their terms of business beforehand.

5. Budget holders shall fully comply with all Competition Law, the Bribery Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and shall so far as is reasonable, satisfy themselves as to the insurance policies of contractors, and their systems of work before awarding works contracts.
6. Budget holders shall not enter into any contract that has been reserved to the Board or delegated to a Board Committee without obtaining the Clerk's approval beforehand. The Clerk shall not permit any budget holder to enter in to such a contract if he/she considers it to be inappropriate or that the required approval has not been given.
7. The relevant budget holder is responsible for ensuring that the procurement of all goods and services is authorised by the Board or in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations. All emergency work must be approved by the Chairman.
8. All procurement of goods and services shall be authorised by the signing and dating of an official purchase order or purchase instruction. On so authorising the procurement of goods or services the budget holder will have satisfied themselves that the Financial Regulations have been complied with and that any approval required by the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations has been obtained. The Clerk shall be authorised to raise, sign and date a purchase order or purchase instruction where the procurement has been authorised by resolution of the Board.
9. The budget holder must never break down a job and string a number of purchase orders or authorisations together simply to avoid having to get 3 written quotations/tenders.
10. The following information must be clearly stated on each purchase order or instruction:
 - i. The name of the supplier.
 - ii. The agreed price of the goods/services required, other than in an emergency or where impractical to do so.
 - iii. The Unique Order No as approved by the budget holder.
11. The Clerk shall ensure that procedures are in place for establishing when goods or services, have been charged, allocated or otherwise expenditure has been committed against an unauthorised budget.
12. All quotes/tenders, delivery notes, invoices for payment and credit notes shall be matched to the official purchase order or instruction, examined and coded before they are proposed for payment or set off. If the budget holder or the Clerk deems any invoice/credit note to be incorrect they shall not process such invoices/credit notes for payment or set off until satisfied that payment or set off is properly due. The quotes/tenders, purchase orders and delivery notes where required to be signed or where amended, shall all be filed together with the invoices/credit notes as otherwise directed by the Clerk
13. The Clerk shall ensure that all Invoices which have been approved for payment are duly scheduled for payment.
14. All Invoices shall be authorised by the Chairman and checked by the Clerk prior to making payment.
15. Where it is considered that there are valid reasons for departing from these procedures the approval of the Chairman shall be obtained. Any such departure shall be reported to the Board.

E BANK MANDATE AND INVESTMENTS

1. No changes shall be made to the Board's bankers or the bank mandate without the prior consent of the Board.
2. Approved signatories for the Board's bank accounts are as follows:
 1. The Chairman
 2. Such other member(s) as shall from time to time be authorised by the Board
 3. Such officers of the Middle Level Commissioners as shall from time to time be authorised by the Board
3. All cheque books, deposit books, banking cards, online access and other documentation or materials relating to the Board's bank accounts shall be retained in the custody of the Clerk.
4. All payments, bank transfers and Investments shall be made in the most efficient/secure manner as determined from time to time by the Clerk
5. The Clerk shall maintain Contact Details relating to financial transactions. All bank accounts shall be reconciled monthly and checked at regular intervals by separate officers of the Clerk.

F INVESTMENTS AND BORROWINGS STRATEGY

1. All investments made by the Board are made within guidance received from CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants) Guidance for the Public Sector, and relevant legislation:
 - The Board's investment activities are limited by statute
 - The Board may invest with major Banks and/or Building Societies
 - The Board's investments are to be regarded as low/medium risk
 - The Board's investments must be made in the name of the Board and not any named individual
2. All investments shall be negotiated by the Clerk and reported to the Board. They must be for an appropriate period.
3. All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Board and shall be from the Public Works Loans Board. In an emergency there may be an exception.
4. No borrowings shall be taken out without a resolution of the Board.
6. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the Clerk.

G COLLECTING MONEY

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies received are properly recorded in the accounting records.
2. Electronic copies of all receipts issued shall be retained for at least six years.

3. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the Drainage Rates and Special Levies are substantially collected by **1 November** each year. Outstanding Rates/Levies shall be pursued in a timely manner after that date.
4. The Clerk shall ensure that procedures are in place for all debts to be substantially collected within 30 days from the Debtor Invoice tax point date and for when a debt becomes 3 months overdue or whenever a debt becomes doubtful or is disputed.

H FUNDING APPLICATIONS

1. Ideally any grant or third-party funding opportunities will be reviewed, supported and approved by the Board, however bidding windows normally constrain the ability to enact this meaning Boards potentially missing out on funding. Therefore, the Clerk and/or Chairman shall be empowered to bid for grant and/or other third-party funding on behalf of the Board. This includes being able to determine and accept any risk exposure.

I SUNDRY DEBTORS

1. Each budget holder shall be responsible for providing the Clerk with the necessary information to enable rechargeable work to be properly accounted for and invoiced, and, any other debts due to be properly invoiced. The budget holder shall advise the Clerk whenever an Invoice is to be raised for goods provided or services rendered, under their control.
2. The Clerk shall ensure that all such Invoices are properly raised as soon as practicable after being authorised.
3. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that all other debts due to the Board are properly raised when required and collected appropriately.
4. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the Board consider whether any rents payable to them should be reviewed by a Chartered Surveyor at least once every 5 years.
5. The Clerk shall calculate any claims for Highland Water payments from the Environment Agency and send such claims to the Agency by the dates specified by the Agency.
6. Any refunds due to debtors for whatever reason shall be approved by the Clerk prior to being paid or otherwise accounted for.
8. The Clerk shall be empowered to collect all sundry debts due.
9. The Clerk shall obtain the Chairmans approval for instigating legal proceedings to collect outstanding amounts in excess of the County Court Small Claims limit.

J EMPLOYING/MANAGING STAFF

1. The Chairman shall be responsible to the Board for all matters regarding any employees, including employment policies, procedures, terms and conditions. The Chairman acts as the employee's line manager. This includes taking capability and disciplinary action against Board employees having followed due process.
2. The Board's approval shall be required for the employment of additional permanent staff.

3. The Chairman shall have the authority to employ temporary staff and replace permanent staff provided the employment costs are contained within the Expenditure Estimates/Budgets approved by the Board.
4. Subject to the above paragraphs and to the terms of any employee's contract, Board members shall not individually have the power to formally offer anyone any form of employment or to dismiss a Board employee, or otherwise take disciplinary action against any of the Board's employees unless the Board has specifically authorised such action by resolution.
5. Board members other than the Chairman and the District Officer shall not individually give instructions to any of the Board's employees, unless delegation has been approved by the Board.
6. The Chairman and the District Officer shall be responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of employees and for determining the nature and extent of these activities.

K ASSET ACCOUNTING/MANAGEMENT

1. Any assets to be sold will be advertised in the appropriate media or by the method most appropriate for securing best value and will be sold for the highest offer (of legitimate bids from reputable sources) unless they are being part-exchanged or traded-in when acquiring another asset, or otherwise sold for a budget price approved by the Board.
2. The Clerk shall be responsible for documenting and maintaining the records of the Board's Assets.

L AUDIT

1. As a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations the Clerk shall ensure that the Board is presented with the Internal Auditor's Report each year. The Board are required to review and where necessary take appropriate action.

M SALARIES AND WAGES

1. The Board shall, where appropriate, seek independent advice before making significant changes to terms and conditions of employment and, save where such changes are as a result of legislative change, no changes shall be made to terms and conditions of employment (deliberately or otherwise) without the prior consent of the Board.
2. The Clerk shall be responsible for the proper compilation of the payroll(s) and for the final determination of pay, as approved by the Board.
3. All annual holiday entitlements (including any carried forward provisions) shall be agreed with the Chairman and/or the District Officer at the beginning of every financial year and signed off by him/her as such, in accordance with the Board's terms and conditions of employment.
4. All time-off in lieu, sick leave, working-from-home arrangements and other absences from work or the work place shall be approved in writing by the Chairman and/or the District Officer.
5. All proposed payments of salaries and wages shall be authorised by the Clerk prior to being made.

N INSURANCES

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for expeditiously submitting all insurance claims that the Board agrees should be pursued. The Board shall be responsible for providing the Clerk with all of the necessary information he/she deems necessary in order to successfully make an insurance claim.
2. The Chairman and/or the District Officer shall immediately notify the Clerk of any loss, liability or damage or any event likely to lead to a claim on any of the Board's insurance policies and shall, where appropriate, notify the police of the relevant circumstances.

O SECURITY

- 1 Keys to the Board's buildings and property shall be controlled by the Chairman and/or the District Officer who shall maintain the list of such key holders.

P REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. The Board and Clerk reserves the right to make reasonable changes to these Regulations at any time in future.
2. Failure to take action against any employee or Member following a breach of the Financial Regulations does not constitute a waiver of the Board's right to take disciplinary action on any future breaches of the Financial Regulations and no single or partial action taken shall prevent any further disciplinary action being taken or other action being taken against any employee or Member.

Mrs Martin drew the Board's attention to the Governance report, advising that this would be taken as read.

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

RESOLVED

- 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

The Board noted and agreed the continued appointment of Whittings.

b) Review of Internal Controls

Mrs Martin 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.

RESOLVED

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

c) Approval of authorised officers for operational/regulatory roles

RESOLVED

The Board were asked to confirm that all employees and contractors of the Middle Level Commissioners are considered duly authorised officers, and that the Board's Chairman, Vice Chairman and District Superintendent 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.

d) Responsible Finance Officer

Following the retirement of Robert Hill, the MLC Treasurer and the appointment of Andrew Wool as the new MLC Head of Finance, the Board approved the relevant resolutions to manage the transition.

RESOLVED

- i) That the role of 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.

e) Risk Management Strategy and insured Values

RESOLVED

The Board considered and approved the sums insured and that these continue to be index linked.

f) Policy Reviews

Further to minute B.1153, Mrs Martin referred to the Board's Finance Regulations and Finance Code Policy which has been reviewed and updated by the clerk and responsible financial officer. The Board also reviewed the Complaints Procedure, Privacy Policy and Anti-Bribery policy and approved the Data Protection Officer.

RESOLVED

- i) That the update and re-publication of the Complaints Procedure and Privacy Policy is approved.
- ii) That the Board reviewed and approved the publication of an Anti-Bribery policy, and the Financial Regulations policy.
- iii) That the MLC Lead Clerk, currently Ruth Martin, acts as the Board's Data Protection Officer and acknowledges that this role will be associated within the incumbent employee role of MLC Lead Clerk.

g) Exercise of Public Rights

Mrs Martin 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.

h) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Mrs Martin 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. She 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 that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

B.1167 Finance Report – Looking Back

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	12
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK
Date:	Tuesday 11 th February 2025	Officer Responsible:	Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Consider and approve the payments for 2024.
- B. Consider and approve the comments of the Auditor on the Annual Return for 2023/24.
- C. Consider and approve the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for 2023/24.
- D. Note the budget comparison and the Highland Water Contributions.

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

Storm Recovery Grant

Following the setting of the rates for 2024/2025 details concerning the Storm recovery Grant were released and claims had to be submitted within an incredibly tight timeframe. A claim for £8,767.62 was submitted on behalf of the Board for excess winter pumping costs (Tranche 1) which was successful and has now been paid.

1. Payments for 2024

- 1.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 1

2. Budgeting and Highland Water Contributions from the Environment Agency

- 2.1 The budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2024 is included as Appendix 2.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Following the submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £3,087.25 (£7,688.73 less £4,601.48 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency for the financial year 2023/2024 based on the Board's actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year. The claim for 2024/2025 in respect of 80% of the Board's estimated expenditure for the financial year 2024/2025 was £8,140.05, however we were subsequently notified by the Environment Agency that they were not able to meet all payments in full for this year and that a payment for 2024/2025 of £6,006.95 was received, a shortfall in year of £2,133.10 against the claims.

Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

Role: Responsible Officer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Payments for 2024

Appendix 2 Budget comparison for 2024

Swavesey Internal Drainage Board**Payments made 2023/2024 (1st January 2024 - 31st March 2024)**

The George Long Charity - Room hire for meeting	24.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of board, planning and development applications)	561.90
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution ((Environmental Officer)	708.00
Association of Drainage Authorities, Great Ouse Branch - Subscription 2023	6.00
K & P J Wilderspin - Supervisors fee (2023/2024)	2,343.60
	3,643.50

Payments made 2024/2025 (1st April 2024 - 31st December 2024)

Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & safety Re-charge 2023-2024	204.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Travelling	3,288.04
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	103.51
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2023/2024, production of board report, planning and development applications)	1,163.70
Middle Level Commissioners - Telemetry charges (Account from Andrew Arnold)	63.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Assisting insurance assessor	66.29
Middle Level Commissioners - Attending site and taking electricity meter reads	69.99
Stantec UL Ltd. - Drainage review at Slate Hall Farm, Barhill	5,040.00
Environment Agency - Precept	971.96
Anglia Farmers Ltd - Electricity meter operator charges	105.23
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station (Payment on account)	8,450.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of electrical installation condition report (Account from CMS Electrical)	168.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	297.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station (Payment on account)	4,225.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	680.08
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	947.05
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whitings LLP 2023/2024 accounts)	618.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station (Payment on account)	4,225.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	172.38
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	(103.68)
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	264.16
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2023/2024 accounts)	252.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of board, planning and development applications)	489.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station (Payment on account)	4,257.70
Faben Joinery - Supply and fit new Iroko boards to weedscreen platform	1,783.20
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to High Causeway pumping station	107.20
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges	2,737.82
Information Commissioner - Data Protection Registration renewal	40.00
Environment Agency - Precept	971.95
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	994.08
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	114.60
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	615.60
	43,382.26

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

Appendix 2

SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD BUDGET 2024/2025

	<u>Estimated 2023/2024</u> £	<u>Actuals 2023/2024</u> £	<u>Budget proposal 2024/2025</u> £	<u>Remarks</u>
1 Insurances	625	670	725	A - Includes for: Refurbish weed-screen deck 3,000 replace lighting in p/s 500
2 Repairs and renewals	2,000	724	5,500 ^A	B - Estimated - new contract rates from Sept '24 for estimated increase in 5 year average
3 Fuel	3,300	16,978	4,000 ^B	
4 Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	13,500	7,711 ^C	13,500 ^D	C - Includes: Flail mowing 4,300 Slubbing 0
5 Planning applications	1,800	5,465	1,800	D - Includes engineers items 10,250
6 Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising etc	6,700	6,202	6,900	E - Provision for engineer fees for review of EA embankment data
7 Environment Agency - Precept	1,890	1,887	1,944	F - Includes receipt of : Full highland water contributions 5,736
8 Improvement works	0	0	1,000 ^E	G - Includes: - average highland water contributions based on probable out-turn. Balance of 23/24 payment to off-set balance reduction Future works fund for works at p/s 3,500
	29,815	39,638	35,369	
LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Highland Water contributions etc	4,125	10,367 ^F	9,679 ^G	
	25,690	29,271	25,690 ^H	

Estimated General Fund Opening Balance	48,734	48,734	42,730
Rates Raised	23,267	23,267	25,690
Net Expenditure	25,690	29,271	25,690
Use of balances	0	0	
Closing Balance	46,311	42,730	42,730

Rate
£0.927
Works for EA carried out under MLC PSCA
and re-charged by MLC.

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Finance Officer, noting that a claim for £8,767.62 had been submitted on behalf of the Board for excess winter pumping costs in Tranche 1 of the Storm Recovery Grant.

a) Payments for 2024

The Board considered and approved the payments for 2024.

b) Budgeting and Highland Water Contributions from the Environment Agency

Mrs Martin referred to the Highland Water Contributions received for 2024/2025 and advised that the Storm Recovery Grant had been adjusted against the Highland Water claim, reducing the claim by £400. Therefore, the original claim of £11,227.30 was reduced to £10,827.30 and a payment of £9,094.20 received leaving a shortfall of £2,133.10.

The claim for 2023/24 had been paid in full.

c) Budgeting monitoring

The Board considered and approved the budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2024.

B.1168 Finance Report – Looking Forward

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	13
Meeting:	SWAVESEY IDB	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD
Date:	Tuesday 11 th February 2025	Officer Responsible:	Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. District Superintendents fees.
- B. Renew its subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities.
- C. Note the Precept to the Environment Agency
- D. Highland Water Contribution
- E. Review and note the receipt of developer contributions. (Confidential papers)
- F. Agree what action to take with regards to any rate arrears.
- G. Consider the Finance Officer's summary and key messages and approve a budget estimate for 2025/26.
- H. Set the rate requirements for 2025/26.

Finance Officer's summary and key messages.

The Clerk to report.

1. Fees, Remunerations and Subscriptions

- 1.1 District Superintendent – Hours worked, Fee, Expenses & consider the use of casual labour.
- 1.2 Subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) to increase by 6.5% for 2025 therefore the annual fee will be £678.00.

2. Precept to the Environment Agency

- 2.1 Internal Drainage Boards are required to pay a Precept (IDB Precept) to the Environment Agency for their expenses managing water passing into main rivers. Predominantly, the Precept funds additional maintenance downstream of and/or benefitting IDB districts.
- 2.2 The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2025.

The precept for 2023/2024 was £1,943.91. Therefore, the precept for 2024/2025 is £1,982.79

3. Highland Water Contributions

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 more than 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 £5,000. Following an earlier Government announcement, details were eventually

released concerning the Storm Recovery Grant and a claim for excess pumping costs for the first tranche (T1) was submitted in the sum of £8,767.62.

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 £400.00, which will be adjusted from the Storm Recovery Grant.

We can confirm that these adjusted Highland Water claims have been paid.

The Highland Water claims totalling £11,227.30 were submitted based on actual out-turn. Against this we need to adjust the Storm recovery elements of £400.00, leaving a net claim of £10,827.30. We were subsequently notified by the Environment Agency that they were not able to meet all payments in full for this year and that a payment of £9,094.20 was received a shortfall in year of £2,133.10 against the claims.

The early indications are that for 2025/2026 Highland Water claims will be capped at around £5,777.36.

4. Estimates for 2025/26

- 4.1 The estimated budget for 2025/26 is shown in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Board are reminded that it is standard practice to budget for an average year in terms of rainfall and associated pumping requirements.

5. Rate Requirements for 2025/26

- 5.1 Appendix 2 details the rate requirement that needs to be set and approved by the Board in order to raise sufficient rate and special levy income to cover the budget estimate.
- 5.2 Board Members are welcome to propose alternative rate requirements and invite these for consideration by the Board along with their supporting rationale and proposed mechanism for catering within the budget estimate and/or the Board's investment strategy.

There will be a new electricity supply contract in place from October 2025 and there are currently no indicators as to possible unit rates for this time. A general inflationary increase has been included.

There has been no indicator for possible insurance costs and a general inflationary increase has been included.

These budget provisions indicate a rate requirement for 2025/2026 of 99.00p, the rate set for 2024/2025 being 91.00p.

Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

Role: Responsible Officer/Assistant Treasurer

Enclosure 1 Contributions from Developers (Confidential Papers)

Appendix 1 Estimates for 2025/26

Appendix 2 Rate Requirements for 2025/26

SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

BUDGET 2025/2026

	<u>Estimated 2024/2025</u> £	<u>Probable Actual 2024/2025</u> £	<u>Budget proposal 2025/2026</u> £	<u>Remarks</u>
1 Insurances	725	947	995	A - Includes for: Replace Lighting in P/S 500
2 Repairs and renewals	5,500	3,261	2,500 ^A	B - Estimated - New contract rates from Sept '24 For estimated increase in 5 year average
3 Fuel	4,000	7,442	4,500 ^B	C - Includes: Flail mowing 4,300 Slubbing 0
4 Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	13,500	9,550 ^C	15,421 ^D	D - Includes engineers items 10,250 (Weed Control £1,500, Work to Drains £2,500, Emergency Work Prov'n £1,000, Flail Mowing £4,500, Report Prep £750)
5 Planning applications	1,800	1,371	1,800	E - Includes receipt of : Full highland water contributions 5,736
6 Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, Printing, Stationery, Advertising etc	6,900	6,407	6,900	F - Includes: Highland Water Contribution based on Estimated Out-Turn Capped as per EA's Forecast Future works fund for works at p/s 500
7 Environment Agency - Precept	1,944	1,944	1,983	
8 Improvement works	1,000	1,000	0	
	35,369	31,921	34,099	
LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Highland Water contributions etc	9,679	11,982 ^E	6,677 ^F	G - Does not include provision for writing off rate arrears Does not include capital improvement funding Does not include provision for pump overhaul
	25,690	19,940	27,421 ^G	

Estimated General Fund Opening Balance	42,730	42,730	56,364
Rates Raised	25,206	25,206	27,421 Rate £0.990
Net Expenditure	25,690	19,940	27,421
Use of balances/Storm Recovery	0	8,368	
Closing Balance	42,246	56,364	56,364

Swavesey Internal Drainage BoardRate and levy requirements

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Board must be borne for 2025/2026 is:-

AREA 1

- a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 62.42%
- b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to South Cambridgeshire District Council – 37.58%.

The product of a rate of £1 in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £10,953.

AREA 2

- a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 70.25%
- b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to South Cambridgeshire District Council – 29.75%

The product of a rate of £1 in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £5,676.

AREA 3

All of the net expenditure must be borne by the Agricultural Sector.

The product of a rate of £1 in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £2,072.

The product of a rate of £1 in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £18,701.

A rate of £1 together with corresponding Special levy will raise £27,698.

EXPENDITURE

Estimated revenue cash balance in hand on 31st March 2025 £56,364.

The estimated net expenditure for the Boards Revenue and Capital Programmes in 2025/2026 is £27,421, is equivalent to:-

- a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 99.00p and
- b) a Special levy on South Cambridgeshire District Council of £8,907.

The full rate raised in 2024/2025 was 91.00p in the £ and a Special levy of £8,187 was issued to South Cambridgeshire District Council to raise £25,205 against estimated expenditure of £25,690.

P BURROWS
Clerk to the Board

January 2025

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Finance Officer.

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions :

a) District Superintendent's Fee

In accordance with holding the role of District Superintendent, the Chairman left the room for the duration of the discussion.

The Board gave consideration to the District Superintendent's fee for 2025-2026. Last year these were increased by 4%.

Mr Dodson said that the Board could not consider giving a dramatic rise due to the financial situation of the Board, and also that the Superintendent needs additional support. Ms Parish agreed, adding that if support is needed from elsewhere then the Board will need to be prepared to pay for this. She added that the Board needed to consider the value of the Superintendent, and that much of his time is not claimed for. Ms Warren-Green added that having a willing and knowledgeable Superintendent is invaluable, and he is worth his money.

Ms Parish proposed a rise of 3% and this was seconded by Mr. Stroude. This was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman returned to the room.

After some further discussion, the Board agreed that the District Superintendent would have access to a contingency of £1000 for the purpose of engaging maintenance works where maintenance support is needed. Any works costing over £1000 would need to be agreed by the Board. The Chairman requested prompt responses to any email correspondence where a decision is required, and that as the Board's quorum is 4, 4 responses to any decision would be required.

RESOLVED

That the Board agree that the District Superintendents fee be increased by 3% for 2025/2026.

That the District Superintendent be approved to spend £1000 for the purpose of engaging maintenance works where maintenance support is needed.

b) ADA subscription

Mrs Martin reported that ADA increased subscriptions by 6.5% for 2025, to £678. The Chairman felt that a 6.5% increase is high, but as the Board may need the assistance of ADA that this subscription should be paid.

RESOLVED

That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2025 be paid.

c) Precept

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 Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2024/2025 to £1,982.79.

The precept for 2023/2024 was £1,943.91.

d) Highland Water Contributions

Further to the earlier discussions regarding the Highland Water Contributions, Mrs Martin reported that early indications for 2025/26 are that the claim will be capped around £5,777.36.

Mr Smith advised that Defra are currently looking at a number of internal drainage board issues, including rating changes and where and how highland water money is paid, which could result in a review. Mrs Martin added that nothing has been formally reported.

e) Contributions from Developers

The confidential papers were reviewed. Some discussions followed on how local developments affect the Board's district. Mr Smith advised that Anglian Water have a permit to discharge from the Uttons Drove WTC, although he is not aware that this discharge has ever been measured. This has caused problems with the Swavesey drain which affects this Board.

f) Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2025/26

Mrs Martin advised that when considering the rating estimates and the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2025/2026, the Commissioners should note the comments made by the Responsible Finance Officer

Mrs Martin highlighted to the Board that this included the items identified by the Operations Engineer and was based on receiving a capped Highland Water claim. She advised that the budget did not include any capital improvement funding or provision for pump overhaul.

Mr Stroude referred back to the previous year's budget and expenditure, where only £19,000 of the budgeted £25,000 had been spent on maintenance. He questioned the need to increase the rate but also felt the need to prepare for funding capital projects. Ms Parish added that any savings were due to the diligence of the Chairman, and the Chairman pointed out that in the previous year no maintenance had been carried out on the drains.

It was suggested to the Board by Mr Smith that due to the way this Board is rated, a rate divisible by 3.5 or 7 may be preferable. With this in mind, Mr Stoude proposed that a rate of 98p in the £ be set. This was seconded by Ms Parish and agreed unanimously.

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2025/2026 and were informed that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be as follows:

Area 1 62.42% drainage rate and 37.58% special levy
Area 2 70.25% drainage rate and 29.75% special levy
Area 3 100% drainage rates

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That a total sum of £ 27,145 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

- iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £ 18,328 and £8,817 respectively.
- iv) That the following rates be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.
 - i. Area 1: 98p in the £
 - ii. Area 2: 42p in the £
 - iii. Area 3: 14p in the £
- v) That a Special levy of £8,817 be made and issued to the South Cambs District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levy referred to in resolution v).
- vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.1169 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That next Meeting of the Board be held on Tuesday 10th February 2026, at the Memorial Hall, Swavesey with a meeting to agree the Accounts provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 25th June via Teams.

B.1170 Any Other Business

The Chairman advised the Board that it may be necessary to call a special meeting of the Board to discuss their future administrative arrangements. The Board agreed that they were happy for the Chairman to continue to make enquiries on their behalf, and the Vice Chairman offered to assist with this.

The meeting closed at 4.05pm

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Chairman

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Date