

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the March West and White Fen Internal Drainage Board
hosted at the Middle Level Offices, March on Tuesday 7th May 2024

PRESENT

M J Mottram Esq (Chairman)	N Bates Esq
D G West Esq (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs J French
J Brown Esq	H Kisby Esq
Miss E Alterton	A Miscandlon Esq
T Alterton Esq	H W Whittome Esq
J Neal	

Miss Samantha Ablett representing the Clerk to the Board, Mr Morgan Lakey (representing the Consulting Engineers) and Mrs Ruth Martin (Lead Clerk) were in attendance.

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

Miss Ablett asked all Board members to sign the attendance sheet and referred to the schedule attached, which recorded the ADA training videos that had been viewed by members. She reported that not all members who had viewed the videos had advised the Middle Level Offices and this was important as details had to be included in the IDB1 return and submitted to DEFRA. She asked all members to mark on the schedule the videos they had watched so a record could be kept.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs D Laws, A Woollard Esq and D Fountain Esq.

B.323 Declarations of Interest

Miss Ablett 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.

- i) Messrs Brown, Whittome and Miscandlon declared an interest in all matters concerning the Middle Level Commissioners as members of the Middle level Board.
- ii) Messrs Mottram and Whittome declared an interest in the matter relating to pump attendants.
- iii) Councillor French declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of Fenland District Council's Planning Committee

B.324 Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**i) Piping point 105-106**

Further to minute B.300, Mr Lakey referred to the Board's request made last year for consideration to be given to piping the drain at point 105 -106, due to the increasing costs associated with the annual maintenance to this section of the drain.

He reminded the Board of the no culverting policy due to loss of habitat and water storage and advised there was no concern with the water flow at this time and this would be monitored going forward.

Members discussed this and agreed the Board should continue with maintenance of the drain as required.

ii) Points 51-52 & 54-55 collapse bank

Further to minute B.300, Mr Lakey reported there were slips within the whole district following the extreme weather conditions last year and these should be integrated with the machine cleansing programme in order of severity.

iii) Crazy Acres Contravention of byelaw

Further to minute B.300, Miss Ablett reported that a further letter had been sent to the applicant regarding infringement on to the 9-metre strip and advised that maintenance should not be restricted by permanent structures including trees.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 9th May 2023 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.325 Constitution and Membership

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB	Subject:	CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Polly Tombleson

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Election

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

Emma Alterton, Tony Alterton, Nigel Bates, Jonathan Brown, Ricky Dring, David Fountain, Paul Hayes, Henry Kisby, Michael Mottram, James Neal, Daniel West, Hugh Whittome

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

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

D. There is currently **1** vacancy

E. Determine whether there are composition changes and/or amalgamations it wishes to progress.

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

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

1. Current status

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

	Elected Members	Appointed Members	Total Members	Quorum
Composition	13	N/A		8
Actual	12	5 FDC	17	
Vacancies	1		1	

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

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary
1	Emma Alterton	Ratepayer	
2	Tony Alterton	Ratepayer	
3	Nigel Bates	Nominee of Ratepayer (G R & P Easton)	
4	Jonathan Brown	Ratepayer	
5	Ricky Dring	Nominee of Ratepayer (Lavenham Fen Farms Ltd)	
6	David Fountain	Ratepayer	
7	Paul Hayes	Nominee of Ratepayer (E C Brown & Son)	
8	Henry Kisby	Nominee of Ratepayer (M C Kisby)	
9	Michael Mottram	Ratepayer	
10	James Neal	Ratepayer	
11	Daniel West	Nominee of Ratepayer (M C Kisby)	
12	Hugh Whittome	Ratepayer	
13			

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	Jan French	FDC	Councillor
2	Dee Laws	FDC	Councillor
3	Alex Miscandlon	FDC	Councillor
4	Tim Taylor	FDC	Councillor
5	Andrew Woollard	FDC	Councillor

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

2. Attendance

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

Elected Members

No	Name	9/5/2023	9/5/2022	4/5/2021	5/5/2020
1	Emma Alterton	Apologies	Apologies	Present	Present
2	Tony Alterton	Present	Present	Present	Present
3	Nigel Bates	Present	Present		
4	Jonathan Brown	Present	Apologies	Present	Present
5	Ricky Dring	Apologies	Present	Present	
6	David Fountain	Present	Present		apologies
7	Paul Hayes		apologies	apologies	
8	Henry Kisby	Present	Present	apologies	
9	Michael Mottram	Present	Present	Present	Present
10	James Neal	apologies	Present	apologies	apologies

11	Daniel West	Present	Present	Present	apologies
12	Hugh Whittome	Present	Present	Present	Present
13					

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022	2/11/2021
1	Michael Mottram	Present	Present	Present	Present

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	9/5/2023	9/5/2022	4/5/2021	5/5/2020
1	Jan French		Present		
2	Dee Laws	Present	apologies	Present	
3	Alex Miscandlon		apologies	apologies	
4	Tim Taylor				
5	Andrew Woollard				

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

- 3.1 To consider the appointment of Chair & Vice-Chair.
- 3.2 There is currently **1** vacancy.

4. Composition and amalgamations

- 4.1 The Board is encouraged to continually monitor and review its membership, financial and climate resilience, along with assessing its influence locally, regionally and nationally. These are all factors that may lead the Board to consider changing its composition and/or amalgamation with (an)other Board(s).
- 4.2 Amalgamations and composition changes are not swift processes and can take a number of years. They require planning and additional/specialist resourcing by the MLC as your clerk, Environment Agency and Defra. Therefore, the Board is encouraged to think ahead five to ten years in its decision making, thinking about the next generation.

5. Training

- 5.1 All Members are asked to digest the Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards published by the Association of Drainage Authorities and view the five accompanying videos intended to bring the guide to life. They are available via <https://middlelevel.gov.uk/about/idb-governance/>
- 5.2 To date 0 of 17 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 8 of 17 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

Miss Ablett reported that during Paul Burrows' 14 months in his role as Clerk to the Boards, he had attended a number of meetings and taken stock of the way in which the Middle Level Commissioners were supporting Boards with the right paperwork to ensure they were providing clarity and consistency across Boards. She advised that with this in mind Mr Burrows considered the agendas needed a refresh to assist Members with the flow and make it easier for minutes of the meetings to be prepared to a better standard and in a timely manner.

She advised that Mr Burrows, having attended several Board meetings during the past year, it was evident that some Boards did not have as good attendance as others and were struggling in term of membership and governance, including one Board having to escalate viability concerns to Defra. She added that the purpose of this agenda item was to assist in reporting this information to Defra in order to bring greater clarity around the strength of Boards in terms of membership. It was Mr Burrow's intention that those Boards that were struggling it may trigger conversations around whether they needed to consider amalgamating with neighbouring Boards.

Miss Ablett also outlined how Mr Burrows had invited all Chairs, Vice Chairs and Board Members who sit on more than one IDB within the Middle Level to an informal session recently 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. She added that a small group was identified to draft an initial case for change and that this would be shared when ready for wider inputs and views.

Election

Miss Ablett referred the Board to page 18 of the report and confirmed that following last years' elections, all present were elected to the Board.

Appointments

The Board considered the annual appointment of the Chairman & Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED

That M J Mottram be appointed as Chairman of the Board

That D West be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Board for a further 12 months

Filling of Vacancy

Members gave consideration to filling the vacancy on the board.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman approach Mr Chris White and invite him to become a member of the Board.

Training

The Clerk reported that ADA are in the process of updating the Good Governance Guide, and a new version is expected with new training materials. Miss Ablett agreed to circulate this once it has been published.

B.326 Clerk's Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB	Subject:	CLERK'S REPORT
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

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

1. MLC Services available for IDBs

- 1.1 There has been significant incremental change over the last 10-20 years in terms of IDB governance standards, financial requirements, health & safety, environmental legislation and capital works delivery, along with a significant increase in the scale and nature of planning and partnership work.
- 1.2 However, what limited agreements and fee arrangements there are in place with IDBs about the MLC Services offered and received pre-date much of this evolution and as such there is significant ambiguity.
- 1.3 As an example of this, the current 'Clerkship agreements' with Boards was agreed in 2014 however there are many services provided by the MLC that all parties would consider as core 'clerkship' services that are not specified within the current agreement, including managing elections, arranging meeting, taking minutes, reviewing policies and publications.
- 1.4 The scale and nature of change ahead of us may well be more significant than that which has been experienced in the last decade. The services provided by the MLC to local IDBs require a review and refresh such that they become fit for the future.
- 1.5 The intent is to develop a service catalogue over the next 12-18 months that will clarify the full range of services that are offered by MLC staff, along with associated terms and conditions and fee arrangements.
- 1.6 Boards will be offered opportunity to engage in the development of the catalogue, such that if there are capacity and capability gaps between the services Boards want and what capacity and capability MLC staffing has to deliver, then the MLC Board can consider if and how they address this within a final service offer.

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

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

1. struggle for membership and attendance.

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

2.2 The Chairs explored the following question;

Beneath the surface, how healthy is your Board today, for tomorrow and for the next generation?

- What worries you?
- Do we have a good picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of our Boards?
- How do we ensure risks and issues are tackled proactively?
- How can we better share success, learning and support across Boards?

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

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

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

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

3. Association of Drainage Authorities - Summary

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

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

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

- 3.4 At the AGM it was confirmed that there would be 6.5% increase in fees for 2024/25 with and in principle same increase for the following two years.
- 3.5 Locally, Marc Heading continues to Chair the Great Ouse branch and the clerking role of the branch is being transferred from the Middle Level Commissioners to Phil Camamile at the Water Management Alliance on behalf of the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards. John Heading's term as the Gt Ouse branch's Director on the ADA Board ended in June with a replacement still to be confirmed.
- 3.6 IDBs locally continue to fund an ADA Directorship place on the Board of Water Resources East. With his retirement from the Middle Level Commissioners, David Thomas vacated this role and has been replaced by Giles Bloomfield of the Water Management Alliance.

4. Fens 2100+

- 4.1 The Environment Agency launched Fens 2100+ with an introductory session for IDB representatives in June 2023. This programme of activity is crucial in informing the medium to long term flood management decision making across the whole Fens as well as framing and driving more tactical and short-term investments.
- 4.2 The governance for the programme is currently being finalised. Paul Burrows will Chair the 'Asset Managers Steering Group' and through this have a seat on the Programme Board.
- 4.3 Projects in Fens 2100+

Fens-wide investment framework

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

Catchment-scale asset investment plans

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

Catchment-baseline reports

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

5. Electricity and Insurance

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

- 5.2 Complaints have been escalated to Corona's Managing Director with the request to release us from our contract with them at no penalty. This has resulted in a great impetus in terms of rectifying the issues, but at the time of writing the situation is far from perfect.
- 5.3 The additional time this has taken our Assistant Treasurer has been significant and the scale of pumping has compounded the issue. This has meant developing a plan for our next contract is behind where we'd like to be and will need due focus over the coming months, bringing together a small group of IDB Chairs to review options and ultimately decide on the next contract arrangements.
- 5.4 OFGEM's new approach to regulation has had an unexpected and considerable impact upon the standing charges within our electricity portfolio. Unless the regulations change this level of standing charge is now baked into future bills regardless of our supplier.
- 5.5 We have flagged the impact this issue will have on Highland Water Claims with the Environment Agency.
- 5.6 We responded to OFGEMs review of Standing Charges and also escalated the issues and our response with local MPs. However, it was the interest of BBC Countryfile who saw a MLC 'tweet' about the issue, that triggered OFGEM to reach out directly to ADA and we joined a session with their policy leads to discuss the issue.
- 5.7 From this and following BBC Countryfile, we understand there to be a recognition that our sector has been unfairly and unintentionally impacted and there's a commitment to review and address.
- 5.8 To clarify questions raised by Members and IDBs in response to our 2023/24 insurance renewal and personal accident cover for members over 80 years old.
- 5.9 With the current insurer, the age limit is 75 years of age to benefit from all the personal accident cover:
- Death - £100,000
 - Permanent total disability - £100,000
 - Permanent Disabling Injuries - £100,000
 - Temporary Total Disablement – Weekly amount £200 for 104 weeks (Deferment period 34 weeks)
 - Temporary Partial Disablement – Weekly amount £100 for 104 weeks (Deferment period 34 weeks)
- 5.10 The benefits, as above, will apply to persons above the age of 75 years with the exception of the temporary weekly benefits. This in no way affects the liability cover of the Board, as with all employees & board members, if they are injured as a result of the Board's negligence, then a claim can be considered by them under the main AXA liability insurance.
- 5.11 In previous years, the personal accident cover only applied to persons up to 75 years of age. For 2023-2024 we requested the policy be extended to persons over 80 years of age. Although we were unable to do this for all benefits, we were able to increase the age for the benefits as mentioned above. The personal accident cover has only been in place since 2017/2018 as it is part of the AXA insurance policy. It was not included in any of the previous insurers' policies.
- 5.12 Over the last round of board meetings a number of IDBs have asked for re-assessments of their pumping stations for insurance purposes. Having taken stock on these requests, this is not a service we are currently able to offer at the Middle Level Commissioners without procuring what would likely be considerable supplier experience that would then be an additional cost to Boards.

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

6. Banking

- 6.1 As has previously been reported, due to regulatory changes from our bankers, the type of accounts held by all authorities had changed. The current arrangements within our delegations from all the Boards we administer are that we have free banking in return for a non-interest-bearing current account and an interest-bearing Business Premium account within which higher interest could be gained on 'surplus' balances by putting them on deposit for fixed periods. The minimum balance for the Business Premium account is £100,000 and higher rates of interest are available for higher deposit amounts and longer periods of investments.
- 6.2 For the larger Boards with >£100,000 available, the Treasurer actively transfers funding between accounts and monitors the situation monthly, balancing the need to have funds available for outgoings versus the ability to maximise income. This is relatively resource intensive.
- 6.3 Following discussion on maximising banking interest at some IDB meetings last year, consideration had been given to Boards 'pooling' deposit funds into a single Business Premium account to enable all Boards to access better rates of interest on balances. To allow this, Boards balances would have to be transferred into a single named account from which the deposit investments would be made.
- 6.4 In order to gauge views on this outline proposal, it has been raised at IDB meetings over the winter period, at which reservations were raised by all Boards. There were reservations about 'investing' Board balances through a third-party name (another IDB) and the possible security of balances under these circumstances.
- 6.5 Given that none of the Boards approached approved to proceed along these lines and under these circumstances we will not be actively developing or promoting this option further unless being directly requested to by all Boards.
- 6.6 With regards to balance security above the FCA Compensation limit, consideration could be given to opening an account with National Savings and Investments where balances are fully backed by the Government. However, to operate these accounts would need to be an online account with mandated authority given to a single person as 'administrator.' As this delegation was an area of concern raised with regards to deposit balance investments, this has not been pursued and is left for the future consideration and instruction.
- 6.7 Boards are asked to note that they will therefore not be maximising their potential interest individually and collectively.

7. Rating

- 7.1 On 7th September 2023 we were advised that South Holland IDB and the Water Management Alliance will no longer be supporting DRS operating on local area networks after 31 March 2025. This rating and election management software has been in place for 25 years. DRS is owned by South Holland IDB and was originally developed by this Board around the year 2000, primarily for its own use.
- 7.2 Since that time, most other IDBs have decided to use DRS under licence and it is therefore their view today that the next rating system should be controlled and developed by ADA, for use by its IDB membership should they want to, given that all but 3 IDBs and 1 DDC in England and Wales now use DRS. ADA have confirmed that they are in positive discussions on this matter.

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

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

8. Lowland Agricultural Peat

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

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

8.2 The Government's response to the Caudwell report recommendation three:

Recommendation 3: Legal protection and powers for managing water for carbon

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

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

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

9. MLC Staffing

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

9.2 This role marks an adjustment for us all, for the Commissioners and for our services to IDBs in that we no longer have in-house legal qualified expertise. Ruth will have a key role in pooling and using

the knowledge and experience we have within the office and within our networks, whilst learning and developing her own knowledge. The intent is to develop and drive a clearer suite of Legal and Estates work packages, using external suppliers where appropriate in a more considered and structured manner.

- 9.3 Sofi Lloyd our Environment Officer has been promoted into a new role of Ecology & Environmental Services Manager. The Environment Act 2021 was a game-changer for IDBs and our journey towards enhancing the environment as part of our delivering our wide range of services now comes with greater expectations, greater responsibilities, greater scrutiny, greater risk and a necessity to work in partnership and collaboration with an increasing variety of groups and organisations. There is also now the opportunity we need to unlock to use our land, assets, operations and waterways to enable the biodiversity net gain responsibilities of others and bring in some income. The MLC Executive Committee recognised this and the need to scale up our ecological capacity and capability. We will be looking to recruit to an Ecologist/Environment Officer role reporting to Sofi in due course as part of the suite of new roles needed to enable the delivery of the increased MLC and IDB capital programme.
- 9.4 One of the other new roles needed to enable increased capital delivery is within our M&E team and we welcomed Richard Wilmer to the organisation in February 2024.

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Miss Ablett referred to the Clerk's comments regarding the procurement of electricity for the Middle Level Commissioners and its administered Boards. She reported that an Electricity Committee had been formed bringing together a small group of IDB Chairs to review options and ultimately decide on the next contract arrangements and advised the Chairman of the Board was a member of the Committee.

She enquired whether the Board would authorise the Electricity Committee to decide the next electricity contract on their behalf.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

That the Electricity Committee be authorised to decide the next electricity contract on behalf of the Board.

B.327 Environment Officer's Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB	Subject:	ENVIRONMENT OFFICER'S REPORT
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Sofi Lloyd

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Identify who is best placed to be the Environmental Representative for the Board to help us to define and agree the ongoing service provision.
- B. Review their current BAP ahead of Env Officers' visit
- C. Ensure an Ecological Screening Report (ESR) is completed and submitted to Sofi well in advance of any non-routine work
- D. Note and comply with the provided flail mowing, badger, water vole and weed screen guidance

1. Services provision to the Board.

Protecting and improving biodiversity and the environment are higher than ever on the political agenda, and the Government is looking for strong environmental delivery from Public Bodies to contribute towards their own challenging statutory environmental targets. The Fens are an area of particular importance due to national peat protection and water resource management strategies. Our local communities are more focussed than ever on our work as a result of the bank raising project but also, because the general public is nowadays much better informed and aware of the state of nature. For these reasons, it is more important than ever for us to be able to evidence how we have considered the environment when determining our approaches to our flood risk and water level management. Inevitably, this has meant that IDBs now require greater support to meet their statutory environmental duties.

Historically, IDBs have made a contribution towards the MLC Environment Officers' salary in order to access ecological and environmental advice and guidance if required. There has been little definition around what services have been included. This is now being reviewed to ensure that we are able to efficiently plan and secure resources to support IDBs to achieve environmental compliance. It is anticipated that fees will need to be increased to reflect this but we expect the fees will remain very competitive against those of qualified external environmental consultants. While we define the level of service required by the IDB over the longer term, but in recognition of the already significantly increased service requirements, the 2024-2025 fees will include a transitional uplift. It is expected that from 2025, the fees charged will be reflective of the defined and agreed environmental and ecological services provided to the IDB.

We have begun to define what a standard IDB support package will need to include to support minimum compliance and the following services have been identified:

- One review visit by Env Officer per year & subsequent reporting
- 1 environmental training day per year
- Budget setting and expenditure recording
- Review & assessment of annual programme of works
- ESR review and sign-off for all non-routine works
- BAP report & review for Board
- Consent applications advice & guidance
- Communication of relevant updates in policy, legislation, regulation and best practice

Please identify who is best placed to be the Environmental Representative for the Board to help us to define and agree the ongoing service provision.

2. BAP Refresh Visit

Sofi will contact the Chairman to organise a district visit in order to discuss and refresh the BAP in the next month. Please advise who is best placed to lead that visit and discussions. Please in the meantime review the most current BAP, which is available on the MLC website: [Appendix 1 \(middlelevel.wpenginepowered.com\)](https://middlelevel.wpenginepowered.com)

3. Work Package Ecological Screening Document (ESR)

Please be reminded that any non-routine maintenance works may require environmental screening in order to identify any ecological or environmental risks and their mitigations. This will ensure that the work is completed compliantly. Please contact Sofi for the ESR template for any such works. This will include bank reprofiling, culverts, piling and significant extents of woody vegetation removal. If there is any uncertainty, please contact Sofi.

4. Flail mowing and compliance

Please ensure that the Boards' flail mowing contractors are aware and comply with the following:

- Undertake grass bank mowing outside the bird nesting season (March to end August). If mowing within the bird nesting season, and vegetation is over 25cm tall, a walkover survey is likely to be required to ensure that any nesting birds are identified and a stand-off area is applied around nesting birds. This will minimise the risk of disturbing them, which would be an offence under wildlife law.
- Flail cutter heights are set to 10cm or higher to reduce the risk of impacting reptiles between March to the end of Sept.
- Any planned flail mowing over a known badger sett must be reported to Sofi at least two weeks ahead of works being undertaken. Please see next bullet point below for more info regarding badgers.
- The locations of all newly discovered badger setts must be reported to Sofi using W3W.
- Flail mowing must not be undertaken within 1m of the waters' edge to avoid the risk of damaging any water vole habitats present. If mowing must take place within 1m of the waters' edge either:
 - a. Vegetation height of no less than 30cm must be maintained on both banks or
 - b. Only one bank should be mown to the waters' edge, leaving at least a 1m width of bankside vegetation uncut on the other bank to ensure refuge and habitat is maintained

5. Badgers and licences

There is a badger licence available specifically to all IDBs nationally, which allows them to undertake a number of routine operations (flailing, bank reprofiling, desilting etc.) near badger setts which would otherwise be classed as an offence under the Badger Act. MLC now operates under these licences. It is the intention to offer badger licence training and administration services to all MLC-serviced IDBs as soon as possible to enable them to improve their operational compliance. However, in the last month, some interpretation discrepancies regarding the conditions of the licence have arisen nationally, which has put this offer on hold temporarily until a clearer understanding is reached and confirmed by Natural England. Until then, it is advised that a stand-off area of 30m around all badger setts is maintained, where no flailing or bank reprofiling or any other maintenance activity should take place, and de-silting arisings should not be placed. Please see the link below to view the full list of activities that are usually licensable that should be avoided around badger setts. It is hoped that a resolution will be reached by late autumn this year to allow routine maintenance to recommence compliantly and the service will then be offered by MLC. If any necessary or urgent works are needed around badger setts in the meantime, please contact me to agree the approach.

[Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes \(CL27\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/licence-to-interfere-with-badger-setts-for-watercourse-and-drainage-purposes-cl27)

Please be reminded that it is an offence to disturb or interfere with a badger sett in any way without a licence. If any interference or disturbance is required, please contact Sofi ASAP.

6. Water Voles

As always, for any work that plans to “break ground” on the any of banks, (bank reformation, bank slip repair, vegetation removal or cutting vegetation lower than 30cm within 1m of the waters’ edge, mooring construction, culverting, head walls, piling etc, please complete the ESR document mentioned earlier in this report and send to Sofi. The ESR will be needed some months ahead of planned works to ensure that all necessary surveys and mitigations can be planned and conducted in plenty of time so that the work is not delayed. Water vole surveys and mitigations can only take place between Feb and Oct. **NOTE:** This process would also need to be followed if a drain needs to be dewatered in order to carry out routine desilting. Dewatering a drain where water voles are present would be considered an offence without a licence.

Please also be reminded that routine ditch cleansing using excavators must ensure that the bank faces are not touched, in order to avoid damaging water vole burrows and habitat, which would be an offence. Buckets should enter and be lifted from the ditch before reaching the bank toe so the bank toe and bank face are not scraped.

For more information on complaint maintenance approaches, please see [IDB Biodiversity Manual – Middle Level](#)

7. Mink Control

We are very much in need of further volunteers to respond to mink raft activation alerts in the area. Any activation would need to be attended promptly within a few hours but the need to respond is likely to be very occasional. Please let me know of any interest. Please also report any suspected mink sightings to Sofi.

A link to the most up to date mink project newsletter can be found here:

[Waterlife-Recovery-Trust-Newsletter-6-Final.pdf \(waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk\)](#)

8. Weed screen spoil heaps

These can provide important refuge for a range of species. If they have been in situ for some time, and they now need to be removed it is advised that they are taken apart carefully using hand tools to ensure that any wildlife can flee without being injured. An excavator bucket can be used carefully and slowly if a banksman is observing directly at the edge of the pile to ensure that any wildlife is spotted and allowed to flee if necessary. If any reptiles or reptile nests or eggs are discovered, they should be re-covered carefully and left in order to remain compliant.

9. Invasive species

When any non-native species (particularly the following) are spotted, please record the location using what3words if possible (if not postcode or grid ref) and inform us ASAP. Useful identification guides and information can be found online at www.nonnativespecies.org

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

Author Name: Sofi Lloyd

Role: Environment Officer

Mr Lakey reported that it was currently planned to refresh the Board’s BAP in the next few months and it was currently considered that routine works should progress normally. However, more intrusive works such as woody vegetation/bank trimming works could require Environment screening work before they could

commence. He referred to proposed changes in the timing of flail mowing, which is being promoted as National Policy resulting from implications to hedgerows. The Vice-Chair considered that this would not generally be a problem in a dry summer/autumn but could become a major issue in wet conditions.

Mr Lakey referred to the proposed depth of cuts that could be allowed under guidance. He referred to issues regarding works around badger sets and apparent contradictions within licences concerning this. He confirmed that this is an ongoing issue which is being challenged nationally and while this is ongoing, it is not possible to proceed with new licences.

He further reported on changes to operating procedures with regards to water vole habitat and how this might affect the Board's flail mowing operations.

Mr Lakey advised the Clerk was encouraging the Board to consider appointing an environmental representative, similar to the Board's Health & Safety representative, who would act as Sofi's go to person.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be appointed to act as the Commissioners' Environmental representative.

B.328 Consulting Engineers Report

Miss Ablett referred the Board to the Consulting Engineers Reports, viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	7
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Tuesday 7th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. **Provide its views on item 3.3.1 *New Developments and the use of SuDS*.**
- B. **Confirm the initial proposals referred to in item 3.3.2 e concerning the re-alignment of the channel on land north of 35 Whittlesey Road remain a suitable option.**
- C. **Provide comments and requirements on item 3.3.2 f regarding the erection of a block of 5 industrial units at 38 Whittlesey Road.**
- D. **Review and approve its Capital Programme.**
- E. **Nominate two representatives to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief for the grant-aided System Study (item 4.2).**
- F. **Consider authorising a sub-committee to make decisions in relation to pumping plant repairs so that if any high-cost items are needed decisions can be made and parts ordered quickly without the need for a full Board meeting, see Appendix 4, item 1.1.**
- G. **If you are unable to provide electricity readings or would prefer the MLC can take quarterly readings; these will be at a cost to the Board for the time and mileage involved. Please approve this if it is required. The approximate cost will be £60 per station per quarter, see Appendix 4, item 1.2.**
- H. **Review the pumping station key dates provided in Appendix 4, item 4.1. If there are any discrepancies or further details can be provided please advise the M&E Engineer. The key dates are an important reference and will feed into the upcoming Key Health Indicators and District Studies.**

1. Overview of services provided to the Board

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

- Mechanical & Electrical (M&E): Providing general advice, routine maintenance, minor works and inspections. Supporting development of capital works programme.
- Capital works: Advising the Board and undertaking client, project and contract management roles.
- Operational services: Maintenance advice, planning and arrangements for the Board's catchment area and designated watercourses. Planning and organising remedial works at pumping stations and structures throughout the district. Attendance at annual Board meetings.
- GIS & Survey
- Strategic Planning: Inputs on behalf of the Board to relevant spatial plans (eg Local Plans), flood & water strategies and plans (eg Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans, Fens 2100+)

- Planning and consenting: Responding to Planning Applications and related matters on behalf of the Board and advising on and issuing byelaw consents. A list of the planning, consent and infiltration device applications responded to since the last report are provided as Appendix 2.

- 1.2 Please note that our planning and consenting services currently only have the capacity to be reactive and there is no proactive enforcement service defined and resourced with no allowance made in the Board's budget for such action.
- 1.3 A Strategic Spatial Planning report will be compiled and published periodically on www.middlelevel.gov.uk and cover the interests of the MLC and all its administered Boards.
- 1.4 In order to reduce the cost to the Board and focus limited resources on delivery rather than reporting, the Board has previously resolved to not have a detailed planning report as part of the Consulting Engineer's report. However, this may have governance related implications and does place a burden on the Board's Officers and/or the Clerk's representative attending the Board Meeting.
- 1.5 The MLC intend to refresh the services provided to IDBs by developing a service catalogue that will clarify the full range of services that are offered, along with associated terms and conditions and fee arrangements. This is expected to be developed over the next 12-18 months. Boards will be offered the opportunity to engage in this process to help define the final service offer.

2. Chief Engineer's summary

- 2.1 The new process for delivering grant-aided schemes is now in progress. As more grant-aided projects come online, the MLC engineers' workload will need to be balanced with additional resources. We are using a number of different external consultants and will be monitoring their performance, using this to inform our future delivery model. The Board has a grant-in-aid allocation for 'White Fen Pumping Station Refurbishment' which will now be amended to a system-wide study to maximise potential grant-in-aid for future works. The study will be fully funded by GiA.
- 2.2 Recent storms (Babet and Henk) may have provided a good opportunity to collect additional data about how the catchment responds to rainfall, however resources are always stretched during an event. We will be able to use telemetry data where it exists, but we encourage the Board members to gather evidence in the form of photos or water level marks (where it is safe to do so), and any other information about the system during an event, which will be useful in supporting any grant-in-aid applications for future works.
- 2.3 Fens Reservoir
Anglian Water's Fens Reservoir development work is moving fast. The Middle Level System has a significant role to play in enabling its delivery, with benefits to all parties; there are potentially significant improvements and financial benefit opportunities to secure. It is imperative that MLC staff continue to be closely involved in consultation with Anglian Water's various design and assessment teams to ensure that the Reservoir does not have any adverse impacts on the Middle Level System and our ability to continue to manage water for the IDB districts. Therefore, it is likely that MLC staff may be required to join meetings with the Anglian Water team at short notice and this may briefly affect work we are delivering for the Boards. In this event, we will make any necessary arrangements to limit the impacts this may have.

3. Technical Services

3.1 General

Clarification is required concerning the contents of resolution of Minute B.299 Clerk's Report Planning & Consenting:

“Planning & Consenting – that the proposed changes are approved and that planning applications should be sent to the Chairman & Vice-Chairman and if there is a conflict of interests, then sent to another member of the Board.”

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

3.2 Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

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

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

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

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

The meeting notes advise that:

“March

Background information on flood risk mechanisms and history (LH): There is complex interaction between flood sources in March, with many small pockets of historical flooding and modelled at-risk areas throughout March. This means isolated high-cost schemes are unlikely to be cost beneficial.

RW provided background and information on the small-scale schemes currently ongoing or recently completed within March.

It was mentioned that owing to the groundwater and geology of this area, soakaway systems will not be effective.

It is understood that there is significant interaction between the surface water sewer system and the old River Nene through March, however there is no known hydraulic model fully simulating this interaction.

Whilst there would be benefit of this representation in a full Integrated Catchment Model (ICM), the development of an ICM is not considered cost beneficial at this stage and will not be pursued for the Cambs LLFA PDP. Nonetheless it will be retained in the option list as a future aspiration.

Several people mentioned that there is currently uncertainty with the drainage and watercourse network within March and the condition of that network. There was consensus that several parties (MLC, AWS and CCC) would all benefit from detailed understanding of the network and its condition, and this could be obtained through CCTV and/or watercourse survey.

Next steps:

1. Further discussion about partnership funding to complete CCTV/survey of the drainage and watercourse system throughout March; and
2. Potential local policy considerations, i.e. Critical Drainage Area (CDA), local guidance, SPD inclusion.”

3.3 Summary of Key Planning Issues

3.3.1 ***New developments and the use of SuDS***

As discussed in the last Meeting Report It is considered from the adverse weather conditions experienced within the last few years that there is sufficient evidence to prove that current surface water design practices are not changing quickly enough and/or do not allow for exceptional weather conditions, such as that experienced in recent years – long periods of wet weather resulting in a high ground water table such as that experienced prior to the December 2020 event; storms experienced featuring several intense back-to-back storms together with periods of wet weather between October 2023 – March 2024; Storm Babet (October 2023) and Henk (January 2024).

In addition, current design does not allow for the complex network of water level and flood risk management systems within the Fens, particularly when they are “at capacity” during October to April and/or where flows can become “locked” due to high water levels taking many days to return to a “normal” level.

Therefore, consideration is being given to requiring designs to:

1. Incorporate a higher Standard of Protection (SoP), possibly up to 0.5% AEP (1 in 200 year) event,
2. Include a greater allowance for Climate Change, in excess of 40%,
3. Consider the consequences and impacts of back-to-back storms,
4. Consider the timing of the discharge to minimise any adverse impacts on the receiving system,
5. Be able to “store” water on site for several days until the peak flows have passed,
6. Use complex controls to enable the most suitable means and time of the discharge.

Several other Boards have raised concerns about the installation and efficiency of SuDS facilities particularly in the longer term and the adverse impacts on their systems. Concerns include the following:

1. The approval and supervision of the installation of SuDS with no post-construction review against their design and performance reviews through their lifecycle.

2. Long term appropriate maintenance and inspection is considered a deficiency and will, in time, result in higher run off rates being discharged into its system that may have a cumulative impact.
3. That despite the weather conditions being experienced recently many balancing ponds are either very full or empty. There have been several reports of ponds overtopping.
4. The cumulative impact of attenuating surface water from developments has been to elongate the duration that the system is under stress. This increases operational costs and could increase the risk of flooding.
5. The need to meet the greater expectations from residents, occupants, operators and promoters of development which requires more regular maintenance operations to alleviate flooding.

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

The above matter was briefly discussed at a C&P FloW Partnership meeting and other IDBs and Cambridge City Council raised similar concerns.

The Board's views on this would be appreciated.

3.3.2 *Site Specific Issues*

March/Westry (General area rather than parish/town boundaries)

- a) *Residential development on land to the north of Woodville, Wisbech Road (Lime Tree Close), March Prudential Property Investments Managers Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 263, 335 & 399) & Guy James Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 743, 746, 808, 815 & 876)*

Further to previous meeting reports, consultation has been ongoing with the developer and Fenland District Council (FDC) in respect of this development as part of a post-application consultation procedure.

In May 2023 a reported incident of raw sewage entering the local drainage system was reported to both the Environment Agency and FDC Environmental Health officers. This was traced back to the foul drainage system serving the 4 built properties in Lime Tree Close. In addition to this pollution incident an issue with blockage of the surface water drains was also reported due to localised surface water flooding on the site. This was reported to Cambridgeshire County Council in their capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority and it was understood that the Council was partly responsible for the surface water drain which was believed to take water from the site south along Wisbech Road (A141) towards KFC/Cobblestones public house.

Investigations carried out at this time confirmed that the foul drainage systems servicing the 4 properties had not been built in accordance with the approved plans. The 4 properties had been connected to a single large tank effectively acting as a cesspit. This tank was overflowing to the adjacent surface water drain discharging raw sewage.

In addition to the foul drainage, it was also confirmed that surface water drainage for the 4 properties and the development road serving the site had not been built in accordance with the approved planning drainage strategy. It was confirmed that the 4 built properties were discharging increased surface water drainage to the local system without the relevant

discharge consent. The approved drainage strategy for the development is for a fully attenuated system restricting surface water to the pre-development greenfield rates.

A meeting was held with the developer and his consultant in June to discuss the ongoing issues. At this meeting the developer confirmed that a foul connection to the AWS Ltd sewer in Martin Avenue was no longer possible. The developer had not been able to agree an easement with a third party to cross their land to make the connection. The developer formally asked at this meeting whether consent to discharge treated effluent to the local system would be granted.

At the meeting the developer was advised in respect of the various breaches of consent with the site and that formal action would be pursued by the Board. However, it had been agreed by the Board to work with the developer to resolve the situation and confirm a suitable drainage system for the development which would comply with the Board's requirements. It was confirmed at the meeting that the question regarding the discharge of treated effluent would be put to the Board.

A meeting of Board members, including the Chairman, Vice Chairman and FDC Councillor Board members of both March West & White Fen IDB and March Sixth DDC was held in October. Senior planning officers from FDC were also invited to this meeting. It was confirmed at this meeting that consent to discharge treated effluent to the local drainage system would not be granted and the development should connect to the local AWS Ltd system in accordance with the approved planning permission.

FDC officers confirmed at this meeting that due to the various breaches of planning permission an enforcement notice would be issued to the developers and property owners in Lime Tree Close. This notice would require either the correction of the breaches in planning permission or the development would need to be removed and the site returned to pre-development condition. On the basis of the decision by FDC to carry out enforcement action it was agreed by the Board members that the Board should progress the formal enforcement action for breach of byelaws.

Following enforcement action by the District Council, the MLC Consulting Engineer, representing both March West and White Fen and March Sixth Boards attended a meeting of officers, Fenland councillors and residents of Lime Tree Close. The meeting attendees included FDC officers from planning, building control and environmental health teams, the County Council highways and flood and water teams, and the residents of the affected properties in Lime Tree Close. The purpose of the meeting was for FDC to discuss the enforcement notice served and deal with any questions from the residents.

At the time of writing the enforcement notice has allowed the residents and developer a period of 12 months to rectify the breaches in planning permission. An initial proposal for resolution of the surface water drainage system has been presented to the Consulting Engineer. Initial comments have been provided and further detailed information has been requested to confirm the proposals meet with the Board's requirements for a fully attenuated discharge.

With respect to foul drainage, it has been confirmed that the only viable solution for the 4 properties are sealed cesspits. This would ensure that no treated effluent is released to the local environment. It is understood that suitable tanks have been proposed and further details requested to confirm that the proposed tank conforms with the required standard for sealed cesspits.

The Consulting Engineer will continue to liaise with the developer through the post-application consultation agreement to review the drainage proposals put forward to resolve the issues and deliver the Board's requirements.

In addition to the specific issues relating to Lime Tree Close described above, there has been further surface water flooding within the local area around KFC and the Cobblestones Public House. Cambridgeshire County Council, in its role as Lead Local Flood Authority, have been investigating the surface water drainage system in this area. These investigations have identified surface water sewers which discharge to the March West & White Fen main drain beneath the A141 flyover (Point 36). In addition, there is an overflow pipe which crosses the A141 at the entrance to Gypsy Lane, KFC/Cobblestones Public House discharging to the private open ditch on the west side of the A141. This surface water sewer pipe is believed to run north along the A141 to Lime Tree Close and provides the potential for the Lime Tree Close site to connect surface water drainage to the March West & White Fen system.

Cambridgeshire County Council have confirmed further investigations will be carried out and have kindly offered to confirm the connection to the open drain fronting Lime Tree Close is positive. The outcome of the County Council's investigation is awaited.

The Consulting Engineer will continue to liaise with the Chairman, Vice Chairman, District Officer and Cllr Tim Taylor (FDC) in respect of this site.

As previously advised discussions to date have been dealt with as a Post-application Consultation, a process provided by the MLC where the applicant pays for any costs incurred in dealing with relevant matters thus alleviating costs on the Board. However, due to illness on the developer's side, a debt in excess of £2,100 has been accrued and it has been recommended that work using this process ceases until the debt has been paid.

However, assistance is likely to be required to resolve this difficult position and if this occurs before the debt is paid this will incur costs on the Board.

b) Erection of a dwelling (2-storey 4-bed) and detached garage at 45 Whittlesey Road, March – D R Betts Bespoke Joinery (MLC Ref No 436, 444, 783 & 821)

Further discussion has occurred and it has been agreed that subject to the Board's requirements being met any application for discharge consent would be viewed positively.

c) Various developments at West Fen Farm, Whitemoor Road, March

- 1. Construction of a biomethane gas and electricity to grid and biofertiliser aerobic digestion plant – Hetherington Properties Ltd (MLC Ref No 448 & 569), Mr W Hetherington (MLC Ref No 539), Client of Cannon Consulting Engineers (MLC Ref No 680), RH & RW Clutton LLP (MLC Ref No 690) + AcrEnergy Ltd (Marubeni Corporation) (MLC Ref No 891)*

Further to previous meeting reports discussions have commenced with AcrEnergy Ltd concerning the installation of an export pipeline connecting the AD Plant with the existing National Transmission Network (NTS) near Poplar House Farm on the southeastern side of the Nene Washes.

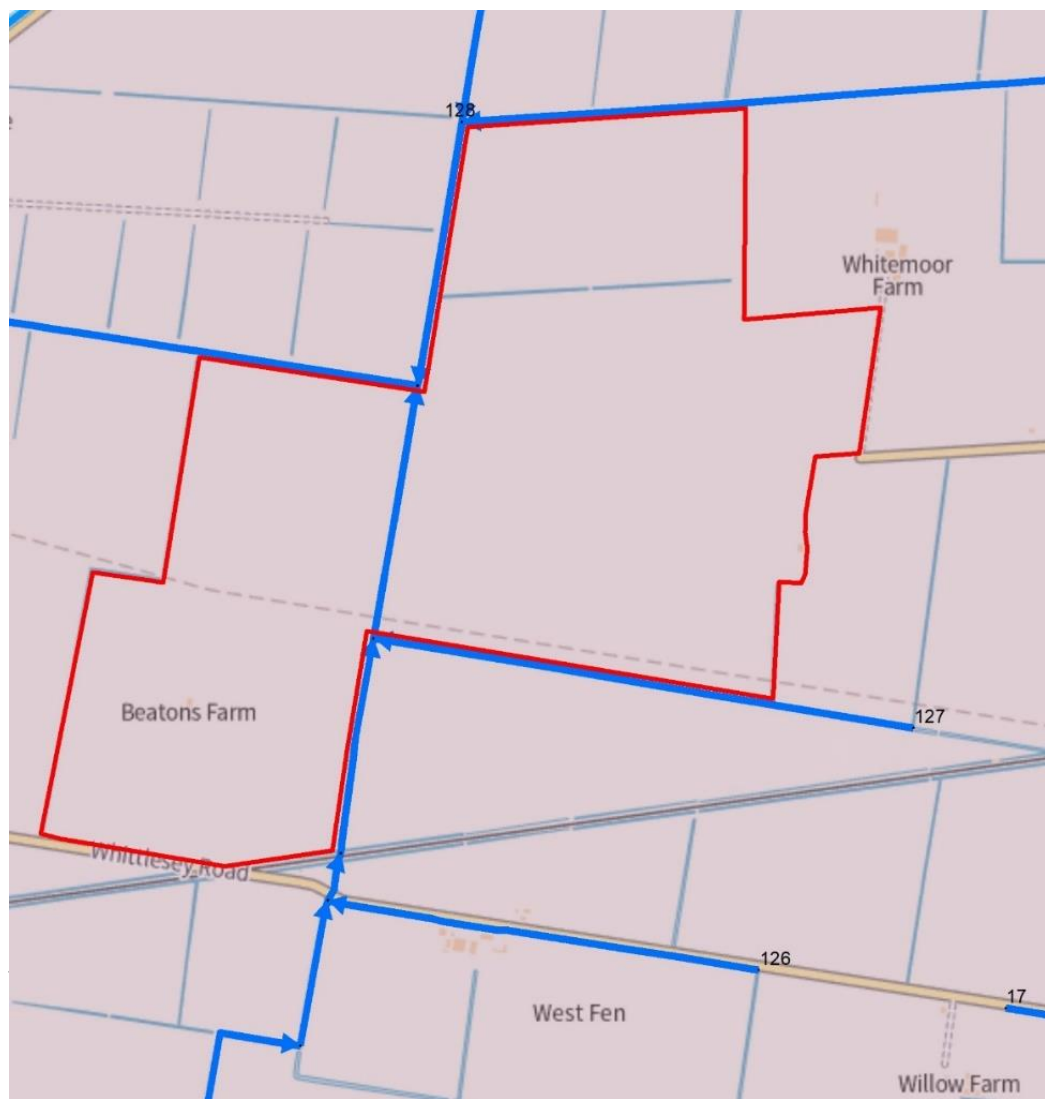
The proposed route is currently shown near the interconnection between the Duncombe's and Moore's Pumping Stations (Points 128-13) and crossing the former Infields Pump Drain to the south of Point 128.

The promoter has been advised that the area experiences “running silt”, therefore, the channel profiles can experience instability potentially leading to failure which may require the side slope to be amended or the installation of piling to reinstate and reinforce the channel. Therefore, it was suggested that given that a gas pipeline is being installed it would be prudent for this to be installed well away from the channel edge.

2. Installation of a solar farm on land at West Fen Farm, Whitemoor Road, March (MLC Ref No 884) - Pathfinder Clean Energy (PACE) UKDev Ltd

A Screening Opinion for a 49.8 MW solar farm covering a site area of 118 Ha has been submitted to the District Council and it subsequently determined that the development does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

As can be seen from the plan below, the extent of the site encompasses several Board’s District Drains which require protecting.



b

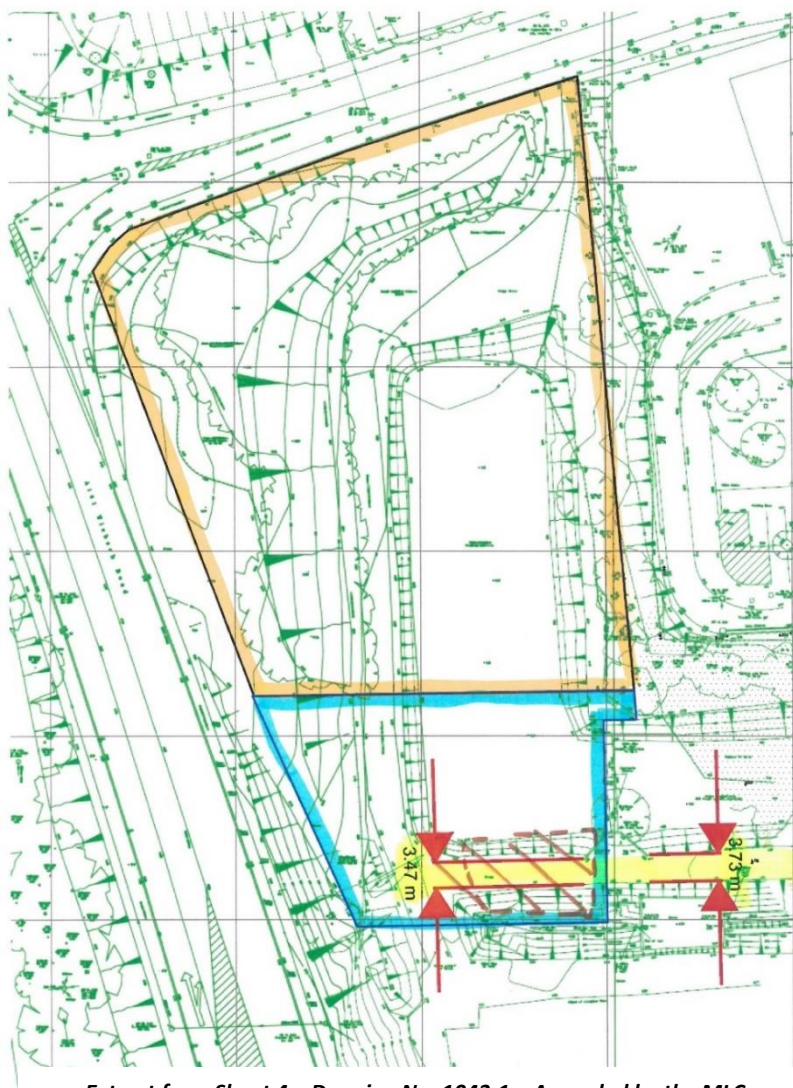
**Due, within and adjacent to
the extents of the proposed Solar Farm, edged red**

Even though a standard letter was sent to the District Council advising that “.. the above application appears to involve development within the Board’s 9m byelaw strip” it was suggested to the Board’s Chairman, who subsequently agreed, that in the circumstances a letter together with a plan showing the location of the Board’s District Drains should be sent to the applicant.

d) *Commercial development to the west and south of Hostmoor Avenue, March*

- (1) *Westry Retail Park to the west of Hostmoor Avenue, March - Brossman Mills Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 591, 611, 704 & 747) and*
- (2) *Commercial development involving works to Phase One, Hostmoor Balancing Ponds to the south east of Wisbech Road/Hostmoor Avenue, Westry [McDonalds’ site] - Bright Edge Ltd (MLC Ref No 405), Client of MTC (MLC Ref No 716) and Cambridge Property Group [Amherst Ltd] (MLC Ref No 757)*

Members will be aware from previous discussions that part of the existing pond has been sold by Anglian Water and contact was received in October from the developer concerning the sale of an additional part of the balancing pond. These areas are shown edged orange and blue on the amended plan (right) which is bounded by Wisbech Road, Hostmoor Avenue, the Tesco Filling Station and the Phase One balancing pond serving the March Trading Park/Hostmoor Estate. The developer has enquired about the width of the maintenance access



Extract from Sheet 4 – Drawing No. 1043-1 – Amended by the MLC

strip to be provided on the northern side of the Board’s Drain which is currently the southern impounding embankment which, according to the topographical survey – Sheet 4 of Drawing No. 1043-1 –, is between 3.47m and 3.73m wide and, therefore, justifying the full 9m may be difficult. However, it was agreed that this should be pursued as an ideal.

The developer is aware of the position and advises that the 9m wide maintenance access strip could be provided but is dependent upon the County Council and their decision

concerning the size of roundabout at Hostmoor Avenue which is currently the subject of some debate, see the MATS entry below, (item g).

- e) *Residential development on land north of 35 Whittlesey Road, March - Greene King PLC (MLC Ref Nos 525, 544 & 561), Client of Caldecote Group (MLC Ref No 566) & MJS Construction (March) Ltd (MLC Ref No 708), MJS Acquisitions (March) Ltd (MLC Ref No 762) & MJS Investments (March) Ltd (MLC Ref No 762 & 896)*

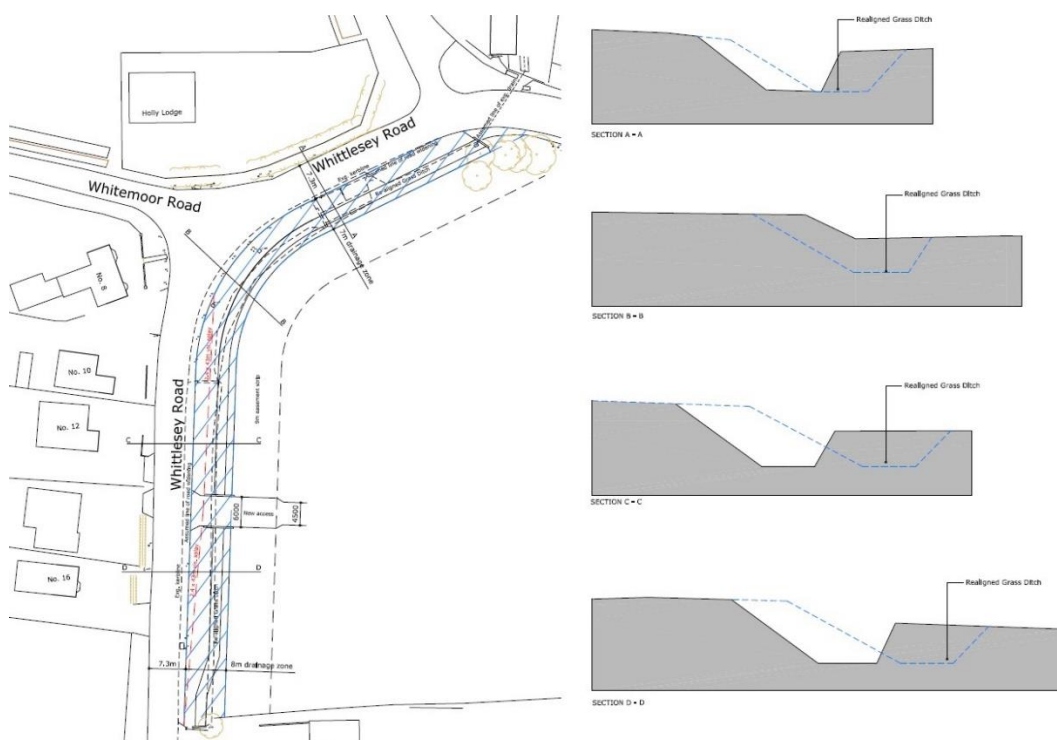
Further to previous Board Meeting Reports a further planning application has been submitted to the District Council for the erection of nineteen dwellings involving culverting the Board's Drain for access (FDC Ref No F/YR24/0211/O, MLC Ref No 896).

In order to prevent the problems currently being experienced at Limetree Close and to protect the Board's system the Board's Chairman gave approval for a bespoke response to be issued to the District Council. This is currently being prepared.

As discussed in the 2014 March and Whittlesey Board Meeting Report the redevelopment of this site does provide an opportunity to resolve concerns about the future integrity and effectiveness of the roadside channel at this location and that works to strengthen/widen the road and/or provide a footpath if required in the future.

The Board was content with the initial proposals concerning the re-alignment of the channel provided that it did not constrain access to, and the integrity of, the Board's system.

The Board's confirmation that this remains a suitable option would be appreciated.



Extract from Sursham Tompkins' Drawing No 5382 19 showing the proposed re-aligned channel

- f) *Erection of a workshop building for storage and general maintenance of construction plant with associated office involving demolition of one existing building and stationing of a mobile home for welfare facilities at 38 Whittlesey Road, March – Mr S Rutterford (MLC Ref Nos 751 & 898)*

Further development of this site has continued since the last meeting and it is understood that a planning application to erect a block of 5 industrial units and a detached industrial shed (Class B2), involving the demolition of existing buildings (part retrospective) has been submitted to the District Council for consideration.

The Board's comments and requirements would be appreciated.

- g) *Proposed highways improvement works at Peas Hill Roundabout and Hostmoor Avenue/Wisbech Road Junction, March [March Area Transport Study (MATS)] - Cambridgeshire County Council (MLC Ref Nos 766 & 893)*

Further to previous Board Meeting Reports a virtual meeting was held with the relevant parties in August to discuss the relevant issues.

A Certificate of lawfulness (Proposed) has been submitted to, and is being considered by, the District Council. The proposed improvement scheme to the Hostmoor Avenue/Wisbech Road junction is the subject of a challenge by the Cambridge Property Group.

The response made by its planning consultant advises that:

1. Special rules apply to permitted development rights where development could have a significant effect on habitat sites hosting a priority natural habitat type or priority species, such as Water Voles, which places a limitation on permitted development as the Town & Country Planning Act confirms that any highway works which may have significant adverse impacts would involve development.
2. “..there has been concerns raised within the March West and White Fen Internal Drainage Board that the proposed works appear to involve development within the Boards 9m byelaw margin” adding that “.. this gives further concern that the proposed works would not be lawful development ..” and that the acceptability of the works should be determined by a planning application.

Benwick

Residential development at Crazy Acres, off Chase Road, Benwick - Client of Stirling Maynard and Partners Ltd (MLC Ref No 661) & Mr A Smith (MLC Ref Nos 715 & 823) [previously White Fen, MLC Ref Nos 025 & 026 - Mr A Smith]

Following the refusal of the latest planning application (FDC Ref No F/YR21/1520/F, MLC Ref No 823) in October 2022 the applicant submitted an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate who dismissed the appeal in October.

4. Capital Programme

- 4.1 The Board's Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 In terms of FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GiA) from the Environment Agency, there is an allocation to undertake a System Study to identify any improvements needed in the system. This is currently programmed for 2024/25 and will include channel surveys, structural condition assessments of pumping stations and other assets, hydraulic modelling, economic and environmental assessments,

and development of recommendations/solutions with the aim of securing further grant for the delivery of those solutions.

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

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

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield

Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Programme

Appendix 2: List of applications since last meeting

Appendix 3: Operational Services

Appendix 4: Mechanical & Electrical Services

Appendix 1

March West & White Fen IDB														
Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)		PREVIOUS YEARS	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	FUTURE YEARS	ALL YEARS
		Pre Yr 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Post Year 10	Total Expenditure
Beggars Bridge p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	29.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0
	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	2.0	2.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Duncombes 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	40.0	40.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	33.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	48.2
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Moores 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	25.0	25.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

March West & White Fen IDB														
Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)														
		PREVIOUS YEARS	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	FUTURE YEARS	ALL YEARS
		Pre Yr 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Post Year 10	Total Expenditure
Staffurths Bridge p	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
West Fen p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	54.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pump o/h programme		10.0	10	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	110.0
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

March West & White Fen IDB														
Capital Improvement Programme (2023/2024)		PREVIOUS YEARS	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	FUTURE YEARS	ALL YEARS
		Pre Yr 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Post Year 10	Total Expenditure
White Fen P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	0	0	24.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	45.0	69.5
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.0	79.6
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pump o/h programme		2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	30.0
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
		68.7	12.5	37.0	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	17.5	12.5	14.5	12.5	294.5	519.7

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	Council Ref.	Applicant	Type of Development	Location
869	F/YR23/0209/RM	Mr N Marsh	Residential (3 dwellings)	Wisbech Road, Westry
870	F/YR23/0340/F	Mr R Khan	Residence	Whitemoor Road, March
871	F/YR23/0362/O	Ideal Prestige Properties Ltd	Residential (Up to 3 dwellings)	March Road, Turves
872	F/YR23/0442/F	Mr & Mrs Cherry	Residence (Double garage)	Grandford Drove, March
873	Pre-app	Mr Ali Boyraz	Residential (2-3 dwellings)	Lime Tree Close, March
874	F/YR23/0494/RM	Mr J Ogden	Residential (3 dwellings) [Reserved Matters Plot One only]	Whitemoor Road, March
875	F/YR23/0497/F	Mr J Allerton	Residence (Single garage)	Burnthouse Road, Turves
876	F/YR23/0499/F	Guy James Ltd	Residential (2 dwellings [part retrospective])	Wisbech Road, Westry
877	F/YR23/0567/PNC04	Mr & Mrs White	Change of use (Agricultural building to 2 x dwellings)	Whittlesey Road, March
878	F/YR23/0566/F	Mr P Briscoe	Residence	Silver Street, March
879	F/YR23/0581/F	Mr & Mrs Kisby	Residence	Middle Road, March
880	F/YR23/0676/RM	Mr J Ogden	Residential (2 dwellings) [Reserved Matters Plots 2 and 3 only]	Whitemoor Road, March
881	F/YR23/0744/F	Mr J Hussey	Residence (Extension)	Red Barn, Turves
882	F/YR23/0863/F	One Wisbech Road March Ltd	Drive-thru Cafe, automated carwash and substation, with associated parking spaces and EV charging points	Wisbech Road, March
883	F/YR23/0942/F	Eastwood RVL March Limited	Industrial (5 units B2/B8 use)	Westry Avenue, March
884	F/YR23/0889/SC	Pathfinder Clean Energy UK Ltd	Screening Opinion (Solar farm)	Whitemoor Road, March
885	F/YR23/0928/F	Mrs Tracey Grant	Residence (Extension)	Red Barn, Turves
886	F/YR23/3144/COND	Strutt & Parker (Farms) Ltd	Agricultural (Grain Store) [Condition 04 (Drainage) and 06 (Nest Boxes)]	Floods Ferry Road, Doddington
887	Enquiry	Client of EP Strategies	Conversion (Barn) [Flood risk assessment]	Whittlesey Road, March
888	Enquiry	Client of Stantec	Storage (Service/depot yard)	Whittlesey Road, March

889	F/YR23/1058/F	Mr J Collins	Change of use (Land to gypsy and traveller residential use 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan and dayroom)	Middle Road, March
890	Pre-application Request	Client of Hexa Consulting	Residential (17 dwellings)	Wisbech Road, March
891	Enquiry	AcrEnergy Ltd. (Marubeni Corporation)	Biomethane Plant and associated export pipeline	Whitemoor Road, March
892	F/YR24/0131/AG1	Bank Farm Ltd	Agricultural	Whittlesey Road, Benwick
893	F/YR24/0112/CERTP	Cambridgeshire CC	Highway improvement works	Peas Hill Roundabout and Hostmoor Avenue junction Wisbech Road, March
894	F/YR24/0145/O	Mr Fletcher	Residential (5 dwellings)	March Road, Turves
895	F/YR24/0175/AG1	Royston Farms Ltd	Agricultural (storage building)	Burnthouse Sidings, Turves
896	F/YR24/0211/O	MJS Investments Ltd	Residential (Up to 19 dwellings)	Whittlesey Road, March
897	F/YR24/0286/AG1	Strutt & Parker (Farms) Ltd	Agricultural (Straw barn)	Floods Ferry Road, Doddington
898	F/YR24/0270/F	Mr S Rutterford	Industrial (5 units and detached shed [B2])	Whittlesey Road, March

The following applications for Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) have been granted since the last meeting:

MLC Ref	Council Ref	Consent No	Applicant	Description of Works	Location	Date consent granted
212 & 259	F/YR01/0964/F & F/YR03/0056/F	MWWF/BC/18	Mr D Betts	Construction of garage and tarmac surface	Whittlesey Road, March	9/6/23

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
212 & 259	F/YR01/0964/F & F/YR03/0056/F	MWWF/DC/24	Mr D Betts	Whittlesey Road, March	9/6/23

No infiltration device applications have been processed since the last meeting.

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	7
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES
Date:	Tuesday 7th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Morgan Lakey

1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance

- 1.1 The maintenance works carried out last year generally accorded with the recommendations approved by the Board at its last annual meeting.

As part of the Board's annual phased programme of bank revetment works within its district, approximately 200m of toe board and piling works were undertaken in the Beggars Bridge Pump Catchment, reach 90-91.

The annual Health & Safety inspection was carried out at the early part of the year by the Board's appointed advisers, Cope Safety Management. Several small issues were identified at the Pumping Stations and the Chairman has approved for the remedial works to be carried out accordingly.



**Revetment works on the left
and bank subsidence on the opposite bank, reach 90-91**

Provisional notices for this year's intended machine cleansing works have been sent out and the extent of this year's phased programme of maintenance works is shown on the site location plan at the end of the Operational Services report.

A recent inspection of the Board's district drains has revealed that the majority are in a generally satisfactory condition and being maintained to a good standard. The inspection indicated that many of the district drains that fall within this year's phased machine cleansing programme will only require light machine cleansing to retain their good status.

Similar to last year's inspection, there are several relatively short lengths of bank subsidence throughout the district. The majority of these are reasonably insignificant and can, with periodic monitoring, hopefully be left to "self-heal". Should remedial intervention be required in the future, they can be prioritised in order of their severity and integrated when the machine cleansing is programmed for the affected reach. The West Fen drains that fall within this year's



White Fen, Reach 9-10 South

machine cleansing programme have some significant bank subsidence and undercutting that will also be assessed prior to works commencing. This will ensure any ecological requirements are met before any proposed bank trimming works take place following the harvest of the adjacent crop

As the Board's annual meeting falls during the early part of the growing season, it is proposed that an inspection of the Board's drains be undertaken during the summer months in order to identify other areas of bank subsidence, and then to prioritise the worst affected reaches such that they can be programmed and dealt with under the phased programme of bank revetment works. In this respect, a sum has been allocated in the Board's estimated costs to allow for toe board and piling works to be undertaken to stabilise and return the side sloping banks to their original profile.

An allowance has been included within this year's estimated costs to allow for a Roundup Pro-Biactive herbicide application to be made in advance of the programmed machine cleansing work, and in any other district drains identified as requiring herbicide treatments, to control emergent weed and reed growths following the Board's inspection later in the summer months.

The Consulting Engineer is undertaking an assessment of herbicide application as part of a wider review of working systems. Any proposed changes will be communicated to the Board.

The Board's flail mowing requirements were undertaken by Mr Robert Dale last year, and he has indicated he is available to undertake the Board's flail mowing requirements again for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing Board's drains has been included within the estimated costs.

A provisional sum has been allocated within the Board's estimated costs to allow for any emergency machine cleansing, Cott (filamentous algae) removal or culvert clearance works that may become necessary later in the year.

1.2 Estimated Costs of Anticipated Drain Maintenance and Weed Control Programme

The estimated cost of this year's recommended Weed Control and Drain maintenance works is as follows. Please refer to the following site plan for locations.

£

1. Machine cleanse the following reaches:

Duncombes Catchment Area

110-111-116	1200	m	@	1.50	1800.00
92-93-94-95-114	1800	m	@	1.20	2160.00
111-112-113-114-115	1100	m	@	1.20	1320.00
117-118-119-120-121-122-123-124-125-102	2650	m	@	1.20	3180.00
128-116-117-127	2000	m	@	1.20	2400.00
119-126	850	m	@	1.20	1020.00

Beggars Bridge Catchment Area

102-101-100-105-106-107	1050	m	@	1.20	1260.00
90-96-97-98-99-100	1300	m	@	1.20	1560.00
70-71-72-73-104-103-99	2300	m	@	1.20	2760.00

West Fen Catchment Area

20-21-22-25-26-27-28	1850	m	@	1.50	2775.00
----------------------	------	---	---	------	---------

White Fen Catchment Area

142-148-149-150-151-152	1900	m	@	1.50	2850.00
150-156-157	750	m	@	1.20	900.00

Carried forward **23985.00**

Brought forward		23985.00
<u>Provisional Item/Estimated sum</u>		
Allow sum for bank reinstatement works	Item	Sum
15000.00		
sub total		
2. Roundup herbicide application	Item	Sum
2200.00		
3. Flail mowing of District Drains	Item	Sum
13000.00		
4. <u>Provisional Item</u>		
Allow sum for emergency machine cleansing, Cott removal or culvert clearance	Item	Sum
3000.00		
5. Fees for inspection, preparation and submission of the report to the Board, arrangement and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance	Item	Sum
3250.00		
TOTAL		£60,435.00

Orders for the application of herbicides are accepted on condition that they are weather dependant, and the MLC will not be held responsible for the efficacy of any treatments.

Author Name: Morgan Lakey
Role: Assistant Operations Engineer

Appendix 4

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	7
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Dave Bantoft

1. M&E key messages and advice

- 1.1 Other than the matters described below, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at each of the stations appears to be mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

There are several outstanding pumping plant issues that need to be investigated and then obtain quotes for repair. Please consider authorising a sub-committee to make decisions in relation to pumping plant repairs so that if any high-cost items are needed decisions can be made and parts ordered quickly without the need for a full Board meeting.

1.2 Electricity Readings

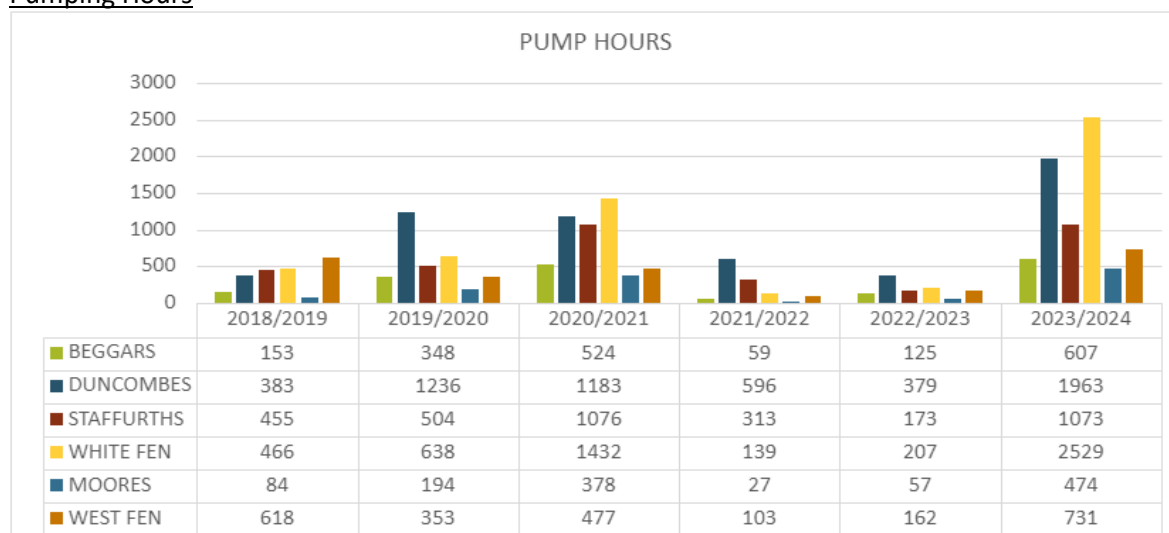
Taking regular and accurate manual electricity meter readings is becoming very important; even for sites with meters that are read remotely. This is so that bills can be verified to ensure correct rates are being applied.

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

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

2. Pumping summary

2.1 Pumping Hours



- 2.2 The 2023/24 pumping season has seen record breaking rainfall and subsequent pumping which has put all pumping plant under immense pressure, which has resulted in more frequent breakdowns.

Pumping station issues are summarised below.

2.2.1 **West Fen**

The weed screen cleaner cable tec reel failed during December 2023, the cleaner can only be used in manual which is labour intensive. The new tec reel was on a long lead time and is due for delivery and fitment in April.

The automatic level controller failed and has been replaced with the MLC spare unit. This will be replaced with a new unit after the pumping season.

2.2.2 **Duncombes**

Pump 2 has had a problem this season with nuisance tripping which was at first thought to be a faulty overload unit. This unit was replaced but there was still some nuisance tripping. The pump needs to be removed in summer for inspection as it has become noisier. Xylem has been asked to quote for a replacement. The last pump purchased in 2022 was £25k so it is likely that a new pump would be around £30k. If the pump is at fault, I would recommend replacement rather than overhaul as refurbishment of submersible pumps of this age is not cost effective.

The weed screen travel motor gearbox and inverter have had to be replaced due to failure. The weed screen power catenary cables are beginning to fail and need to be replaced. As the weed screen cleaner is now 20 years old it is worth having this overhauled which is likely to cost in the £12k to £17k range.

2.2.3 **White Fen**

There was an issue with pump 2 tripping during December which was traced to a cable that needed to be re-terminated. Pump 1 intermittent tripping issues from previous years continued at the start of this season, this caused problems with coping with levels during events. This tripping issue was traced to a faulty overload unit which was replaced and has since not caused any nuisance tripping.

The Power factor correction capacitors for the pumps have failed and these will need to be sourced and fitted this summer.

3. Inspections

- 3.1 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are due and being booked for completion in April 2024.

- 3.2 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out in September 2023. There was an issue with loose footplate bolts on the weed screen frame. This was rectified immediately, and subsequent checks have ensured this is not reoccurring.

4. Pumping Station Key Dates

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

Station	Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul	Controls	WSC	Controls
Duncombes	1993	P1 2022 P2 2003	P1 2022 P2 2003	1993	2004	2004
Moores	1989	1989	2018	1989	N/A	N/A
Staffurths Bridge	1983	1983	P2 2004	1983	2006	2006
Turves (Beggars Bridge)	1972	1972	2004	1972	2007	2007
West Fen	1972	1972	1990	1972	2002	2002
White Fen	1964	1991	P1 1992 P2 1993, 2014	2006	2017	2017

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

Attention was drawn to item 3.3.1 of the report – New developments and the use of SuDS and Members were asked for their views.

This was discussed further and Members raised concerns over the effectiveness of the use of SuDS. They considered that current systems did not operate effectively and current surface water design practises did not take into account exceptional weather conditions or the complex systems within the Fens.

They expressed their concerns regarding the use of attenuation ponds, in particular the operation and maintenance aspects and confirmed they had the same concerns as those raised by other Boards.

Miss Ablett drew the Board's attention to the Planning Engineer's comments relating to a further planning application for the erection of nineteen dwellings involving culverting the Board's Drain for access (MLC Ref No 896) and enquired whether the Board still considered the initial proposals remained a suitable option.

Members confirmed this was the case and re-iterated that the 9-metre maintenance strip must be retained.

Miss Ablett referred to the planning application for the erection of a workshop building for storage and general maintenance of construction plant with associated office involving demolition of one existing building and stationing of a mobile home for welfare facilities at 38 Whittlesey Road, March (MLC Ref Nos 751 & 898) and advised the Planning Engineer had asked for the Board's comments.

Members expressed their concerns regarding surface water management at the site and requested the Planning Engineer advises the applicant of this.

Mr Lakey detailed the proposed drain maintenance programme for the current year.

The Chairman reported he had asked the pump attendants to inspect the banks throughout the Board's district to identify any banks that may have collapsed.

He advised that due to the continued wet weather the Board's levels had been dropped below the usual winter levels which may not have helped with the stability of the banks and increased the risk of collapse. He enquired that if the Board was faced with the same situation in the future do Members consider that was the best course of action or should other actions have been taken.

Mr Brown considered the risk to be short term as the decision was made in anticipation of the likely increase in water received due to weather forecasts, which turned out to be the correct decision.

Mr Lakey advised that if the levels had not been lowered the increased flow of water would have saturated the bank and probably put more at risk of collapse.

Miss Alerton considered the greater risk would have been the flooding of property so if lowering the levels reduced that risk then it was the correct course of action.

Members raised concerns on the efficiency of the Anglian Water attenuation pond and reported they had never seen it full. Mr Lakey explained the attenuation pond had a calculated outlet to ensure the discharge did not exceed greenfield rate and would only start to fill if the inlets exceeded this rate, as they did in 2020.

The Chairman reported that Tesco had flooded in 2014 and yet the attenuation pond was empty. Mr Lakey advised the localised flooding was due to failures in the Tesco surface water infrastructure that still remains blocked and unmaintained.

The Chairman reported that this matter had been discussed in the past, but as to address Members concerns, he suggested he should meet with Mr Lakey and discuss the matter further. If they considered there was anything more that Anglian Water should be undertaking then he would contact Board Members.

Miss Ablett enquired whether the Board wished to authorise the Chairman to take any action he considered necessary following discussions with Mr Lakey and this was approved.

Miss Ablett referred to the Capital Programme and advised that a District Wide study was programmed for 2024-2025, which would identify works required regarding the district and pumping stations. She explained that once the study had been completed it would highlight what works were necessary, the urgency of the works and the estimated costs and this information would be used to update the Capital Programme, which would then become more meaningful. Miss Ablett warned the Board should bear in mind that all works may not be fully funded by GIA and therefore should consider how these works will be funded in the future.

She asked the Board if they would be willing to nominate two representatives to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief. After discussion, both the Chairman and Vice Chairman were nominated.

Miss Ablett reported the M & E Consulting Engineer had advised there were several pumping plant issues that needed to be investigated and he had asked the Board to consider authorising a sub-committee to make decisions relating to pumping plant repairs.

Members agreed the sub-committee should consist of all pump attendants, together with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Miss Ablett advised that some repairs were necessary at West Fen and White Fen pumping stations as reported by the M & E Consulting Engineer in his report, which would likely cost in the region of £13,000 and she enquired whether the Board were happy to approve these works. Members agreed it was necessary for these works to be undertaken.

Miss Ablett referred to the Engineers recommendation that pump 2 at Duncombes pumping station should be replaced, together with an overhaul of the weed screen cleaner. She advised that the costs would likely be in the region of £20,000 and £15,000, respectively, and confirmed that if these improvement works, were approved it was likely the cost would have to be met by loan funding.

Discussions ensued and Members agreed with the recommendations made by the M & E Consulting Engineer and agreed the funding of these works would be discussed later in the agenda.

The Chairman reported that he considered pump attendants would benefit from some sort of training regarding how to operate their pumping stations. He advised that he used to have instructions in the pumping station, but these were out of date and new ones were required.

Mr Brown considered that instructions were required in all pumping stations as these would be useful in assisting pump attendants providing cover for pumping stations with which they were unfamiliar.

The Chairman also enquired whether Ricky Dring could have some one-to-one training with the M & E Consulting Engineer.

Members agreed to request instruction sheets be provided for each pumping station and training given to Ricky Dring by the M & E Consulting Engineer.

RESOLVED

- i) That the reports be approved
- ii) That the drain maintenance programme and costings be approved
- iii) That the Chairman meet with the Consulting Engineer to discuss the operation of the Anglian Water attenuation pond and be authorised to take any action he considered necessary following these discussions.
- iv) New Developments – SuDs

That the Chief Engineer be made aware of the Board's concerns over the use of attenuation systems in particular the operation and maintenance thereof and the engineer convey these concerns when dealing with planning applications.

- v) Further planning application for the erection of nineteen dwellings involving culverting the Board's Drain for access (FDC Ref No F/YR24/0211/O, MLC Ref No 896)

That the Planning Engineer be advised the initial proposals concerning the re-alignment of the channel remain the most suitable and the 9-metre maintenance strip must be retained.

- vi) Erection of a workshop building for storage and general maintenance of construction plant with associated office involving demolition of one existing building and stationing of a mobile home for welfare facilities at 38 Whittlesey Road, March (MLC Ref Nos 751 & 898)

That the Planning Engineer conveys the Board's concerns regarding surface water management at the site.

- vii) The Capital Programme be approved in principle and kept under review.
- viii) That the Chairman and Vice Chairman be nominated to work with the Consulting Engineer to prepare a project brief.
- ix) That pump 2 be replaced and for the weedscreen cleaner to be overhauled at Duncombes pumping station
- x) That repairs be undertaken at West Fen and White Fen pumping stations
- xi) That a sub-committee consisting of all pump attendants, the Chairman and Vice Chairman be authorised to make decisions relating to pumping plant repairs
- xii) That an instruction sheet be provided for each pumping station to assist pump attendants
- xiii) That the Consulting Engineer liaise with Ricky Dring to arrange training relating to the operation of the pumping station

(NB: Councillor French declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of Fenland District Council's Planning Committee)

B.329 Health & Safety

Viz:



Site Safety Inspection Record

March West and White Fen SSI 110124

Complete

Name of organisation:	March West and White Fen IDB
Date of site visit	11.01.2024 09:00 GMT
Address of inspected premises	White Fen Pumping Station West Fen Pumping Station Moore's Pumping Station Duncombes Pumping Station Beggars Bridge Pumping Station Staffurths Bridge Pumping Station
Name of Advisor	Simon Cross
Time of arrival at site:	11.01.2024 09:00 GMT
Audit Name	March West and White Fen SSI 110124

Audit

An opening meeting was held with

Morgan Lakey

1

Introduction. During this visit all six pumping stations within the responsibility of the IDB were visited to determine progress on recommendations made previously and also if any significant changes had occurred, or significant risks were evident.

2

Signage. Previous recommendations had been made regarding the replacement of faded or illegible hazard warning signage at the pumping station sites, e.g. electrical hazard and automated machinery operating without warning. Most of the sites have now been provided with replacement signage for automatic machinery. In order to provide a consistent standard of signage at each of the pumping station sites, it is recommended that signage is displayed on the site access gate(s) or perimeter fencing where provided, or pumping station building that has the following information:

- Pumping Station Name.
- IDB Name.
- Location details, eg. Grid ref, 'What Three Words'
- Contact details for emergency (e.g. name, phone number, email).
- Hazard warning pictograms relevant to the site, e.g. electric shock, automated machinery, deep water or fall from edge, no unauthorised entry, etc.

It was suggested that Middle Level Commissioners are contacted to facilitate this.

3

White Fen Pumping Station.

* Weed pile. As reported previously, it was observed that a large weed spoil pile had accumulated and was adjacent to an unprotected water's edge, which was not clearly visible. In addition, part of the palisade fencing close by had slipped and was leaning. The ground leading to and around the pile from the access gate was grassy, uneven and sloping. It was reported that the pile is removed using relevant plant equipment/tractor as required. See photo 1 below. It is recommended that the site and activity is reviewed and appropriate edge protection provided, with modifications to the ground surface if required as well to reduce the risk of vehicles slipping.

* Access steps. It was noted that the wooden handrail at the side of the access steps to the weedscreen was damaged. See photo 2 below. It is recommended that a suitable handrail is installed.

* Outfall. It was noted that some of the edge protection at the outfall appears to be missing, understood to have been stolen and the remainder appeared to be too low to be effective. Although access is infrequent, there remains a risk of a fall from height into water. It should be ensured that appropriate edge protection is provided around the outfall, at a suitable height and ideally with intermediate rail for additional protection. In addition, the access steps / platform area appeared to be in poor condition, covered in vegetation and with no handrail, increasing the risk of a slip or trip. See separate Photographic Risk Assessment at the end of this report for more detail.



Photo 1



Photo 2

4

West Fen Pumping Station.

Although the weed screen area and automatic weed screen cleaner were within the confines of security palisade fencing, the pump house building was accessible from the adjacent public right of way. It was observed that some of the slabs on the access pathway were becoming dislodged, increasing the risk of a

Audit

An opening meeting was held with

Morgan Lakey

1

Introduction. During this visit all six pumping stations within the responsibility of the IDB were visited to determine progress on recommendations made previously and also if any significant changes had occurred, or significant risks were evident.

2

Signage. Previous recommendations had been made regarding the replacement of faded or illegible hazard warning signage at the pumping station sites, e.g. electrical hazard and automated machinery operating without warning. Most of the sites have now been provided with replacement signage for automatic machinery. In order to provide a consistent standard of signage at each of the pumping station sites, it is recommended that signage is displayed on the site access gate(s) or perimeter fencing where provided, or pumping station building that has the following information:

- Pumping Station Name.
- IDB Name.
- Location details, eg. Grid ref, 'What Three Words'
- Contact details for emergency (e.g. name, phone number, email).
- Hazard warning pictograms relevant to the site, e.g. electric shock, automatic machinery, deep water or fall from edge, no unauthorised entry, etc.

It was suggested that Middle Level Commissioners are contacted to facilitate this.

3

White Fen Pumping Station.

* Weed pile. As reported previously, it was observed that a large weed spoil pile had accumulated and was adjacent to an unprotected water's edge, which was not clearly visible. In addition, part of the palisade fencing close by had slipped and was leaning. The ground leading to and around the pile from the access gate was grassy, uneven and sloping. It was reported that the pile is removed using relevant plant equipment/tractor as required. See photo 1 below. It is recommended that the site and activity is reviewed and appropriate edge protection provided, with modifications to the ground surface if required as well to reduce the risk of vehicles slipping.

* Access steps. It was noted that the wooden handrail at the side of the access steps to the weedscreen was damaged. See photo 2 below. It is recommended that a suitable handrail is installed.

* Outfall. It was noted that some of the edge protection at the outfall appears to be missing, understood to have been stolen and the remainder appeared to be too low to be effective. Although access is infrequent, there remains a risk of a fall from height into water. It should be ensured that appropriate edge protection is provided around the outfall, at a suitable height and ideally with intermediate rail for additional protection. In addition, the access steps / platform area appeared to be in poor condition, covered in vegetation and with no handrail, increasing the risk of a slip or trip. See separate Photographic Risk Assessment at the end of this report for more detail.



Photo 1



Photo 2

4

West Fen Pumping Station.

Although the weed screen area and automatic weed screen cleaner were within the confines of security palisade fencing, the pump house building was accessible from the adjacent public right of way. It was observed that some of the slabs on the access pathway were becoming dislodged, increasing the risk of a

slip or trip. In addition, the wooden handrail along the pathway and steps appeared to be in poor condition, with significant rot and deterioration. It should be ensured that the access pathway and handrail is suitable for use. See separate Photographic Risk Assessment at the end of this report for more detail.

5

Moore's Pumping Station.

This pumping station is the only one without an automatic weed screen cleaner, the screen is cleared manually using a rake/crome. Following a previous recommendation, an intermediate rail had been installed on the edge protection barrier, however it appeared to be quite far back, with a gap potentially still big enough to fall between. It is recommended that the operative undertaking the screen clearing is consulted to ensure that the position of the rail is as close to the platform deck as practical whilst not hindering the screen clearing task.

No other observations were made at the time of the visit.

6

Duncombes Pumping Station.

Previously, it had been noted that a couple of the paving slabs on the access path between the building and weed screen deck were loose and rocked when stood on. These have now been secured.

No other observations were made at the time of the visit.

7

Beggars Bridge Pumping Station.

No other observations were made at the time of the visit.

8

Staffurths Bridge Pumping Station.

At the outfall location, adjacent to a public right of way, it was observed that although there was edge protection, this was just a single top rail. In addition, the level of the ground appeared elevated, reducing the effectiveness of the height of the rail as edge protection. See photo 3 below. For additional protection, it is recommended that an intermediate rail is also installed and the vegetation maintained to ensure a suitable ground surface.



Photo 3

Photographic Risk Assessment

Photographic Risk Assessment

Photographic Risk Assessment 1

Location/Task/Activity

White Fen Pumping Station. Outfall point and winding handle - missing and lowered edge protection and poor condition of access steps, no handrail.

Nature of hazard

Missing and lowered edge protection increasing risk of fall from height into water. Poor condition of steps, no handrail for support, increasing risk of slip or trip.

Recommended remedial action

Ensure appropriate edge protection provided around the outfall point, at a suitable height and with intermediate rails.
Ensure access steps / operating platform area are suitable, clear of vegetation and with handrail alongside steps.

Applicable legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act
1974

Management of Health and
Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Work at Height Regulations 2005

Workplace (Health, Safety and
Welfare) Regulations 1992

Level of Risk

High

11.01.2024 10:42 GMT



Photo 4

Photographic Risk Assessment 2

Location/Task/Activity

West Fen Pumping Station. Access steps, pathway and wooden handrail to pump house building.

Nature of hazard

Uneven and displaced steps/pathway. Poor condition of wooden handrail.

Recommended remedial action

Ensure steps and pathway are provided with even, stable surface.
Ensure a suitable, secure handrail is provided alongside the steps and pathway.

Applicable legislationHealth and Safety at Work Act
1974Management of Health and
Safety at Work Regulations 1999Workplace (Health, Safety and
Welfare) Regulations 1992**Level of Risk**

Medium

11.01.2024 09:44 GMT



Photo 5

Advisor's signatureSimon Cross
11.01.2024 20:00 GMT**Departure time**

11.01.2024 11:45 GMT

Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments1
From 0 to 99

Media summary

Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5

Mr Lakey referred to the report received from the Board's Health & Safety advisors, Cope Safety Management, and advised that he had met with them as the Chairman had been unavailable at the time. He reported that a few matters had been highlighted such as signage, the installation of hand rails and repairs to uneven steps and advised that it had been agreed with the Chairman that these works be undertaken by the Consulting Engineers.

B.330 Governance

Miss Ablett referred the Board to the Governance report and summarised its content, viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	10
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	GOVERNANCE
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023
- B. Note the continued appointment of Whittings as Internal Auditor.
- C. Review and approve the updated Risk Management Strategy.
- D. Review and approve the Financial Regulations & Financial Code.
- E. 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.
- F. Advise on any changes they wish to make to insured values.
- G. 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.
- H. Exercise of Public Rights
- I. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments
- J. Note the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra.
- K. Authorise the Chairman to sign the annual return for 2024.

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

- 1.1 The AGAR provides the framework by which the governance of the Board is assessed. The Board's last AGAR is available on its page via www.middlelevel.gov.uk
- 1.2 The Board/Commissioners to consider:
 - the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2023. (Appendix 1)
 - the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2023. (Appendix 2)
- 1.3 The Board are reminded that 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. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

- 3.1 The Board's Risk Management Strategy has been recently updated and is available as Appendix 3. It is due for formal review and update in 2027. The Board are asked to review and approve the updated strategy.
- 3.2 The insured values for the Board's assets are detailed below:

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN IDB
INSURED VALUES OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS

	As At 1st April 2024
Dunscombe Pumping Station	754,950.00
Beggars Bridge Pumping Station	537,480.00
Staffurths Bridge Pumping Station	839,460.00
Moores Pumping Station	439,450.00
West Fen Pumping Station	537,480.00
White Fen Pumping Station	771,850.00
	3,880,670.00

4. Financial regulations & Code

- 4.1 To review and approve the Financial Regulations & Financial Code and to confirm the next review period (Appendix 4)

5. IDB1

- 5.1 The Board's IDB1 return to Defra for the year 2022/23 is included as Appendix 5.

6. Annual Governance Statement:

- 6.1 To review and complete the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 6)

7. Exercise of Public Rights

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.

- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 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.

8. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments:

- 8.1 The clerk to report.

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Appendix 1	Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 2023
Appendix 2	Internal Audit Report
Appendix 3	Risk Management Strategy 2024 – 2027
Appendix 4	Financial Regulations & Financial Code
Appendix 5	IDB1 2022/23
Appendix 6	Annual Governance Statement 2024

March West & White Fen Internal Drainage Board**Notice of conclusion of the audit****Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023**

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

- 1 The Audit of accounts for the March West & White Fen Internal Drainage Board for the year ended 31st March 2023 has been completed and the accounts have been published.
- 2 The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of March West & White Fen Internal Drainage Board on application to:

The Clerk
March West & White Fen Internal Drainage Board
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Board

Date of Announcement: 25th August 2023

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

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

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

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

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

10/05/2023 16/05/2023 18/05/2023

WHITING & LIA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

P. BROWN - WHITING & LIA

Date

18/01/2023

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

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

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

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

09/05/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

B.316

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

Chairman

M. J. H. H. H.

Clerk

L. J. H. H.

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	212,282	231,944	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	139,249	142,054	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	6,731	18,846	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	5,213	5,213	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	121,105	186,343	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	231,944	201,288	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	239,262	251,517	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,444,200	3,444,200	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	5,154	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

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

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

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

Date

15th April 2023

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

09/05/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

B. 318

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

M.S. [Signature]

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

In respect of

March West and White Fen– DB0052

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

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

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

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

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

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

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

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

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

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

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

21/08/2023

Appendix 2



BB/MM053

30 June 2023

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

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

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2022-2023

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

General points

1. Asset Valuations and Insurances – mainly for residential properties

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

PARTNERS

James D Carter FCA
Christopher D Ridgway FCA
Andrew P Winerley FCA

Lyn G C Piper FCA
Andrew R Rand FCA
Tina J Platt FCA

Erith J Day FCA
Amanda E Newman FCA
Paul M Jefferson FCA

Jonathan P Moore AECB
Nicholas Edgley CTA
Stephen D Mallett ACA

ASSOCIATES

Richard A Alcock ATT
Ben Smith ACA
Scott R Bishop FCA

Hannah R Wisbey ACA
Mika Blackledge CTA
Janine King ACA

PRACTICE MANAGER

Joett S Frostick

Whitings LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales, number OC331218. The above listed Partners and Whitings Capital Ltd are the members of Whitings LLP. The registered office is: Greenwood Court, Upliner Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP87 7GY. 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-contentious probate 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

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

Client comment:

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

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

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

2. Employee Benefits

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

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

Client comment:

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

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

3. Provisions

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

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

Client comment:

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

4. Budget figures

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

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

Client comment:

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

5. Surplus Funds

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

Client comment:

A brief summary of treasury management:

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

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

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

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

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

6. Rental of Land

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

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

Client comment:

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

7. Financial Regulations

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

Client comments:

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

Specific Points**Conington & Holme IDB**

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

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

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

Client comment:

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

Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB – Joint Pumping Arrangement

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

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

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

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

Client comment:

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

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

March East IDB

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

Client comment:

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

Hundred of Wisbech

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

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

Client comment:

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

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

Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB

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

Client comment:

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

March 3rd IDB

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

Client comment:

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Administered by:



**middle level
commissioners**

Governance

Risk Management Strategy 2024 - 2027

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

Risk Management Principles

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

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

Risk Definition

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

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

Risk Categorisation

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

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

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

Risk (and Issue) Management Choices

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

Terminate (heaviest strategy) - the risk will not be allowed to occur.

Treat - the risk may occur, but its impact or likelihood will be lessened through mitigating actions.

Transfer - the ownership of the risk will be formally moved to someone else not currently the risk manager. *The new owner may decide to terminate, treat or tolerate the risk.*

Tolerate (Lightest strategy) - the risk will be allowed to occur with little to no mitigating action.

Risk Management Approach

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

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

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**Financial Regulations****INDEX**

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>	
A	INTRODUCTION	1
B	CONTRACTS	1
C	RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICERS	2
D	ESTIMATES	2
E	BANKING	2
F	INCOME	2
G	PURCHASES OF GOODS AND SERVICES	3
H	EMPLOYEES	4
I	STORES	4
J	ASSETS	4
K	AUDIT	5
L	FRAUD OR OTHER IRREGULARITIES	5
M	WRITE OFFS	6
N	SALARIES, WAGES AND PENSIONS	6
O	BOARD EMPLOYEES ETC	6
P	MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES ALLOWANCES	7
Q	INSURANCES	7
R	SECURITY	8
S	PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY	8
T	REVIEW	9

A. INTRODUCTION

1. These Financial Regulations are designed to supplement the Board's Standing Orders and to ensure that the funds and assets of the Board are properly accounted for and controlled.
2. Any variation to these Regulations shall be made by a resolution of the Board.
3. The Clerk shall, where appropriate, prepare additional rules of procedure, supplementary to these Regulations, to ensure the maintenance of financial control and security.
4. The Clerk or such officer as shall be designated by him ("together referred to as "the Clerk") shall, together with the Board's Internal Auditor, be responsible for determining the format of the Board's accounting systems, annual Accounts and supporting records and shall ensure that the accounting systems determined by him are observed and that the accounts of the Board and supporting records are kept up to date.
5. The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining an adequate and effective internal audit of the accounts of the Board in the manner he considers to be best.
6. The Clerk shall ensure that the Board's annual Accounts are prepared as soon as possible after 31st March in each year, and in accordance with the dates as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended).
7. "The Board" shall mean the March West and White Fen Internal Drainage Board.

B. CONTRACTS

1. The Board shall determine the procedures to be employed in connection with the procurement of goods and services save that, if no procedures be specified, three (or more) written quotations shall be invited unless the obtaining of tenders is prescribed by the rules applicable to the particular procurement.
2. Tendering may be selective or open, although, whenever possible, selective tendering shall be used and tenders invited to seek to ensure that the required number of tenders are actually received.
3. Tenders shall be opened, not earlier than the closing date prescribed in the tender documents, in the presence of such person or persons as may be authorised by the Board. A declaration shall be signed to such effect by the persons present at the opening of the tender(s) and a report on the tenders received shall be made to the Board.
4. Where a tender is accepted other than the lowest, the approval of the Chairman of the Board, or of the Board itself shall be obtained.
5. In the case of a tender for rents or similar sums where these are to be paid to the Board, where a tender is accepted other than the highest, the approval of the Chairman of the Board, or of the Board itself shall be obtained.

C. RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICERS

1. All employees, officers and members of the Board have a general responsibility for the security of the property of the Board, for the avoidance of loss and for economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

D. ESTIMATES

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of annual Estimates.
2. The Estimates should be determined as at the commencement of each financial year – using the best information available.
3. The Estimates shall be approved by the Board each year in order that the rates and special levies can be determined at the appropriate time.
4. The Clerk shall be responsible for seeking reasons and causes for deviation from the Estimates and shall inform the Board of all material variances.

E. BANKING

1. The Clerk shall advise the Board's bankers in writing of the conditions under which each bank account (which account must be in the Board's name) shall be operated.
2. All payments other than those made from Petty Cash shall be made by either cheque, BACS, direct debit or internet banking or via the Board's Office Credit card.

The main bank accounts will be operated on the following basis:-

- a) Where payment is made by cheque:-

Current Account – All cheques will be signed by both an authorised officer and an authorised member.

Labour Account – All cheques will be signed by an authorised officer.

- b) Where payment is made by any other means the invoice will be authorised by a Board Member and payment made by an authorised officer.

3. Salaries and Wages will be paid by BACS and all BACS transactions will be authorised by the Clerk.
4. All bank transfers to non-Board bank accounts (save those solely made between inter office accounts which may be made by the Clerk) shall be authorised as in paragraph 2. of this Section.
5. The Clerk shall seek to ensure that the Board's bank accounts are managed so as to produce maximum benefits for the Board.

F. INCOME

1. An official receipt shall be made out for every sum received by the Board and must show:-
 - (a) Date of receipt
 - (b) Amount received
 - (c) Type of remittance
 - (d) Account Reference

Copies of all receipts raised shall be retained by the Board.

2. Board monies shall not be used for the encashment of private cheques.
3. All cheques, cash etc received shall be banked at least weekly. Disbursements shall not be made from cash received but from the Petty Cash float. Banking shall be daily when large sums are received which require this.
4. Keys to safes, cash boxes etc shall be carried only by those authorised to do so and shall only be used by or under the supervision of such persons.
5. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies received are properly brought to account in the Board's accounting records.
6. Any debts which the Clerk considers are not recoverable may be written off with the Board's approval unless they are considered not recoverable following legal advice when the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman may authorise them to be written off.

G. PURCHASES OF GOODS AND SERVICES

1. Any goods and services for which provision is made in the Estimates may be purchased by an authorised employee, officer or member.
2. The purchase of any goods or services may be effected by an authorised employee, officer or member where they are of a type the authority to purchase which has been delegated to that employee, officer or member by the Board.
3. The purchase of any goods or services not referred to in paragraphs 1 or 2 of this Section may be authorised by the Chairman or District Officer where they are of a routine or recurring nature or form part of the Board's maintenance expenditure.
4. For all goods and services other than as provided for in this Section, the Board's approval shall be obtained prior to the purchase being effected.
5. The requirements under this Section may be dispensed with if the goods or services are required urgently such that it would not be feasible or practical to obtain the necessary approval. In such cases, the Chairman shall be authorised to effect the purchase in conjunction with the Clerk. Any purchase made under this paragraph shall be specifically reported to the Board at the earliest opportunity.
6. An official order shall be placed for all goods and services.

7. All invoices for payment shall be examined, coded and approved and shall be certified by the appropriate authorised employee, officer or member.
9. See Section B “Contracts” for further Financial Regulations in connection with the purchase of goods and services.

H. EMPLOYEES

1. The Board’s approval shall be required for the employment of additional permanent employees.
2. The Chairman or District Officer shall have authority to employ additional temporary employees provided the revenue consequences are contained within the current annual Estimates.
3. All time records and other pay records shall be in a form approved by the Chairman or District Officer in conjunction with the Clerk and shall be certified and submitted in accordance with their instructions.
4. The Clerk shall be responsible for the proper compilation of the payroll and for the final determination of pay.

I. STORES

1. Stores records shall be in such a form and shall comply with such systems of control as the Chairman or District Officer shall in conjunction with the Clerk approve.
2. All goods received shall be checked as regards quantity and/or weight and inspected as to quality, condition and specification. A delivery note shall be obtained from the supplier, wherever possible, and signed by the person receiving the goods. No goods shall be signed for as “in good condition” or similar wording without being properly inspected. Therefore most goods delivered should be signed for as ‘received uninspected’.
3. All goods issued from stores shall be properly accounted for and recorded.
4. All breakages and losses of goods held in store shall be recorded and reported to the Board’s office in order that appropriate action can be taken.
5. There shall be a physical check of all items in store at least once a year and the stock taking records shall be signed by the responsible person(s).

J. ASSETS

1. All assets other than stores owned by the Board shall be accounted for in an asset register maintained by the Clerk. The asset register shall reflect additions and disposals of assets and record the cost or valuation of the assets.
2. From time to time as the Board deem appropriate the accuracy of the asset register shall be compared with a physical inspection of the Board’s assets.
3. The asset register shall be placed before the Board for inspection at the earliest opportunity following the completion of the annual Accounts.

4. Any sale of Board assets will be undertaken either through competitive Tender or in the manner approved of by the Board.
5. See Section B “Contracts” for further Financial Regulations in connection with Tenders.

K. AUDIT

1. As a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) the Clerk shall arrange for an internal audit of accounting, financial management and other operations of the Board to take place. This audit will be undertaken by an external person qualified to perform this function.

2. Authority of Internal Audit

Auditors are authorised to:

- (a) Access/enter at all reasonable times any Board premises or land
- (b) Have access to all assets, records, documents, minutes, correspondence and control systems relating to any aspect of the Board
- (c) Require and receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under examination
- (d) Require any employee, officer or member of the Board to produce or account for cash, stores or any other Board asset under his or her control
- (e) Request access to records belonging to third parties, such as contractors
- (f) Have full and free access to all employees, officers, members and committees
- (g) Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scope of work, and apply the techniques required to accompany audit objectives

Auditors are not authorised to:

- (a) Perform any operational duties for the Board
- (b) Initiate or approve accounting transactions
- (c) Direct the activities of any Board employee, member or officer, except to the extent that such employee, member or officer has been appropriately assigned to assist the Internal Auditor.

3. In addition all employees, members or officers of the Board are required to assist the External Auditor, or his/her authorised representative, in the performance of his/her duties under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

L. FRAUD OR OTHER IRREGULARITIES

1. Any employee, officer or member concerned shall immediately notify the Clerk and/or the Internal Auditor in accordance with the Board’s Fraud and Corruption Policy of any matter which involves, or is thought to involve, irregularities concerning cash, stores or other property of the Board or any suspected irregularity in the exercise of the functions of the Board.
2. Any financial irregularity involving an employee of the Board will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.

M. WRITE OFFS

1. In addition to the exercise of any powers under Section F above the Clerk shall have the authority to write off the following:-
 - (a) damaged or stolen goods for which it is not considered that the Board may make a valid insurance claim, where those goods do not form part of a stock account
 - (b) surplus goods and materials
 - (c) goods, vehicles or materials that are considered to have no material value due to deterioration or obsolescence.
2. The appropriate employees, members or officers shall inform the Clerk of any item under paragraph 1 of this Section that they consider should be written off together with:-
 - details of the item or debt to be written off
 - the circumstances necessitating the write off
 - the reasons why he/she considers that the debt is irrecoverable or that no proceeds on sale would accrue to the Board
3. Where any items to be written off do constitute part of a stock account, the procedures for recording the write off within the Board's accounts and the method of disposing of the goods shall be approved of by the Clerk. The Clerk shall then make the appropriate adjustments to the Board's accounting records.

N. SALARIES, WAGES AND PENSIONS

1. The payment of all salaries, wages, compensation and other emoluments to all present or former employees, members or officers shall be made by the Clerk or under arrangements controlled by him.
2. Each responsible employee, member or officer shall notify the Clerk immediately, and in the form prescribed by him, of all matters affecting such payments, and in particular:-
 - resignations, dismissals, suspensions, secondments and transfers
 - absences from duty for sickness, unpaid leave or other reason, but not normal leave
 - changes in remuneration, other than pay awards and agreements of general application
 - information necessary to maintain records of service for pensions, income tax, national insurance and the like
3. Unless determined otherwise by the Board, the Clerk shall be responsible for overseeing the private use of the Board's vehicles and shall be notified by the responsible employee, member or officer of any financial contributions in respect thereof, to be made by members, employees or officers.

O. BOARD EMPLOYEES etc

1. All members, officers and employees of the Board shall conduct themselves in a polite and courteous manner as expected by the Board.
2. Members, officers and employees must declare to an appropriate responsible officer any financial or other interest, which could conflict with the Board's interests.
3. It is a criminal offence for a member, an employee or an officer of the Board to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing anything, or showing favour or disfavour, from or to any person, in their official capacity as such a Board member, employee or officer.
4. In terms of hospitality and gifts, only usable gifts of a small value may be accepted by individual staff or a section as a whole. Under no circumstances may cash be accepted as a gift.
5. Hospitality of a value greater than the value specified from time to time by the Board by resolution must be recorded in a Hospitality Book to be kept at the Board's offices.
6. Where an outside organisation is seeking to sponsor a Board activity (whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily), the basic rules concerning acceptance of gifts and hospitality shall apply.

P. MEMBERS' AND EMPLOYEES' ALLOWANCES

1. All claims for payment of car allowances, subsistence allowances, travelling and any other incidental expense shall be submitted as required duly certified, in a form approved by the Clerk.
2. The certification by or on behalf of the responsible member, employee or officer shall imply that the certifying person is satisfied that the journeys were authorised, the expenses properly and necessarily incurred and that the allowances are properly payable by the Board.
3. An employee or officer shall not certify a claim form made payable to him/herself.
4. Payments to members, (including co-opted members of the Board or its Committees), who are entitled to claim travelling or other allowances will be made by the Clerk upon receipt of the completed prescribed form.
5. No member shall be allowed to claim an allowance or expenses from more than one body.

Q. INSURANCES

1. The Clerk shall, in consultation with the Board's insurance broker initiate all insurance cover and oversee the negotiation of all claims in consultation with other members, employees or officers where necessary or appropriate.

2. Responsible employees, officers or members shall promptly notify the Clerk of all new risks, properties or vehicles needing to be insured, and of any disposals or alterations affecting existing insurances.
3. Responsible employees, officers or members shall promptly notify the Clerk of any loss, liability or damage or any event likely to lead to a claim on any Board policy, and shall where appropriate notify the police of the relevant circumstances.
4. All appropriate employees of the Board shall be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.
5. The Clerk shall annually, or at such other period as he considers necessary, review all insurances held by the Board in consultation with such others as may be appropriate.
6. Responsible employees, members or officers shall consult the Clerk in respect of the terms of any indemnity which the Board is requested to give.
7. The responsible employee, member or officer shall inspect insurance policies of contractors who undertake works on behalf of the Board to ensure as far as possible that all necessary cover has been taken out.

R. SECURITY

1. Each responsible employee, member or officer is responsible for maintaining proper security at all times for all buildings, stores, plant, vehicles, equipment, cash, documents and information under his/her control. Each responsible person shall consult the Clerk in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is considered that special security arrangements may be needed.
2. All members, employees and officers of the Board have a duty to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and any amending legislation. Responsible officers shall ensure that members, employees and officers are aware of their responsibilities under this legislation through the provision of suitable training and the circulation of relevant information on the subject.
3. Keys to safes and similar receptacles are either to be carried on the person of those responsible or kept locked away in a safe and secure place at all times. A list of such key holders shall be supplied to the Clerk. Where keys are transferred, the new recipient assumes responsibility. The loss of any keys must be reported immediately to the Clerk.

S. PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

1. Each responsible employee, member or officer shall notify the Clerk of any case where steps are necessary to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to moveable property.
2. The Board shall not be liable for accidental loss or damage to the personal possessions which members, employees or officers use whilst on Board business that are not included under the Board's insurance policies.

3. All recovered valuables such as jewellery, watches and other small items of a similar nature and documents of title shall be kept under safe custody as directed by the Clerk, and shall, if not claimed, be disposed of in a manner determined by him.
4. In the event of theft of personal items from employees, officers or members, a full report shall be made by the person affected as soon as the theft has been discovered. All such incidents shall be recorded and investigated and where appropriate reported to the Police. Where possible, the Clerk or responsible employee, officer or member shall make appropriate recommendations to improve security.

T. REVIEW

These Financial Regulations shall be reviewed at least every ten years by the Board.

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**FINANCIAL CODE**

SECTION		Page
A	SUMMARY	2
B	SCHEME OF BUDGET DELEGATION	2
C	MANAGING BUDGETS & REPORTING	3
D	PURCHASING GOODS & SERVICES	4
E	BANK MANDATE & INVESTMENTS	6
F	INVESTMENTS AND LOANS STRATEGY	6
G	COLLECTING MONEY	7
H	SUNDRY DEBTORS	7
I	EMPLOYING/MANAGING STAFF	7
J	STOCK IN STORES/DELIVERED TO SITE	8
K	ASSET ACCOUNTING/MANAGEMENT	8
L	AUDIT	8
M	SALARIES AND WAGES	8
N	INSURANCES	9
O	SECURITY	9
P	REVIEW OF FINANCIAL CODE	9

SUMMARY

1. This Financial Code supplements the Board's Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Schedule of Reserved Matters and Scheme of Delegations to ensure that its resources are properly managed, accounted for and controlled. It should be read together with those Regulations, Orders, Schedule and Scheme together with any supplementary guidance produced by the Clerk in respect thereof.
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 this Code.
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 save by or with the approval of the Clerk. The Treasurer to the Middle Level Commissioners from time to time shall be the Board's Responsible Financial Officer, as defined in and for the purposes of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
5. The Clerk shall be responsible to the Board for 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 accordance with any advice received from the Internal Auditor and with the provisions in force from time to time 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..
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. References in this Code to "the Clerk" shall be a reference to such officers of the Middle Level Commissioners 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.

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 is so authorised by the Board and is allocated funds for the purpose for 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 for preparing and managing 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 into 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 or of 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.
6. All correcting journal entries shall always be authorised and approved by the Clerk.
7. All employees and members have a responsibility for health and safety, compliance with policies, 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.
8. All members and employees shall familiarise themselves with and observe the Schedule of Reserved Matters, the Financial Regulations, the Scheme of Delegations and this Code.
9. Failure to comply with any aspect of this Code 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.

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. 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 appropriate procedures are in place for alerting the Clerk immediately should a Local Authority fail to make their Special Levy payment at the agreed time, or where Drainage Rates are outstanding following reminder.
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 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 has organised for the Board during the reporting period and the cost of such work.
8. The Clerk shall also prepare a Financial Report for each Board meeting and, shall prepare any other management accounting/financial report that may be required by the Board.

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 approved 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/ obtained</u>	<u>Quotation/Tenders to be</u>
<= £2,000	No quotations/tenders required
> £2,000 and <= £5,000	Obtain 1 written quotation
> £5,000	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 approved 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 and the Bribery Act 2010 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 in to 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 and this Code 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 cost centres to which the item(s) will be allocated and thereby charged to.
 - iv. 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 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 a Register of Passwords and 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 LOANS 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 in major Banks and 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 unless a short term or emergency loan is required.
4. No loans shall be taken out without a resolution of the Board.
5. 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.

H 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 promptly.
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.
7. 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.
8. The Clerk shall be empowered to collect all sundry debts due.
9. The Clerk shall obtain the Board's approval for instigating legal proceedings to collect outstanding amounts in excess of the County Court Small Claims limit.

I EMPLOYING/MANAGING STAFF

1. The Chairman and/or the District Officer shall be responsible to the Board for all matters regarding any employees.
2. The Board's approval shall be required for the employment of additional permanent staff.
3. The Chairman and/or the District Officer 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 and to take disciplinary action against (including the dismissal of) Board employees.
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.
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.

J STOCK IN STORES/DELIVERED TO SITE

1. The Board's Consulting Engineer shall be responsible to the Board for all matters relating to the security of the stock in stores or delivered to site and for managing stock in and out in respect of any works which he is undertaking on behalf of the Board.
2. The responsible person regarding the physical check of and accounting for all other items in stock will be the Chairman or the District Officer.

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 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.

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 CODE

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

Internal Drainage Boards in England



Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2023

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

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

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

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

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Section A – Financial information

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

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

Special levies information for financial year 2023-24 (forecast)	
Name of local authority	2023-24 forecast £
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	49,398
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	49,398

Section A – Financial information (continued)**Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2023**

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

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2023 £
INCOME		
1. Drainage Rates		99,920
2. Special Levies		42,134
3. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		825
4. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		3,870
5. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		13,877
6. PSCAs from EA and other RMAs		
7. Loans		
8. Rechargeable Works		
9. Interest and Investment Income		6
10. Rents and Acknowledgements		5
11. Other Income		283
Total income		160,900
EXPENDITURE		
12. New Works and Improvement Works		56,370
13. Total precept to the Environment Agency		16,380
14. Watercourse maintenance		45,167
15. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		49,851
16. Administration		17,010
17. PSCAs		
18. Rechargeable Works		
19. Finance Charges		5,213
20. SSSIs		
21. IDB Biodiversity and conservation (other than item 20 expenditure)		715
22. Other Expenditure		850
Total expenditure		191,556

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
23. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		(30,656)
24. Developers Funds income not applied in year		57,318
25. Grant income not applied in year		

Notes:

11. Include all other income, such as absorption account surpluses (for example plant and labour absorption accounts).
12. State the gross cost of undertaking minor capital works that have not been capitalised and the annual depreciation charges of all major schemes that have been capitalised. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the schemes.
13. State the total precept demanded for the year as properly issued by the Environment Agency, in accordance with section 141 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Providing that the precept has been properly issued as before stated it should always be included here, even when the Board has appealed against the amount of contribution, in accordance with section 140 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Where the Board knows with certainty the outcome of any such appeal, it should also include the appropriate accrual/prepayment.
14. State all costs associated with the maintenance of watercourses, meaning work associated with open channels, pipelines, culverts, bridges, etc. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the maintenance programme.
15. State all costs associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures.
16. Include the cost of non-technical staff only, office accommodation, annual depreciation of office equipment that has been capitalised, minor office equipment that has not been capitalised, postages, telecoms', stationery, printing, advertising, auditing of accounts, general insurances and all other costs associated with supporting the organisation. Please note that this does not include support costs, which are directly associated with the delivery of front line services.
17. State all costs associated with the PSCA
18. State all costs associated with undertaking work for third parties. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with undertaking the rechargeable work.
19. Include the cost of servicing any borrowing, in terms of bank/loan/hire purchase Interest payable.
20. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – specifically for helping to achieve favourable condition on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In most cases, these costs will be incurred in implementing actions set out in SSSI Water Level Management Plans or SSSI River Restoration Plans.
21. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – that are likely intended to help conserve biodiversity (other than works on SSSIs). These costs are likely to be incurred in implementing actions set out in an IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan or other conservation actions on non-designated sites.
22. Include all other expenditure, such as a provision for bad/doubtful debts, write-offs, and absorption account deficits (for example plant and labour absorption accounts).
23. For the disposal of assets, state the difference between any proceeds from the sale/disposal of the asset and the cost of the asset less accumulated depreciation.
24. Total balance of developer fund year end.
25. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B –IDB Reporting

Policy Delivery Statement

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

Is an up to date statement in place and copy (or weblink)

provided to Defra, and EA? Yes ☒ No ☐

Biodiversity

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

If "yes" is the Biodiversity Action Plan available on your

website? Yes ☒ No ☐

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

2022

Have you reported progress on BAP implementation on your web site?.....

Yes ☐ No ☒

When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?.....

09/05/2022

Do you have a biosecurity process?.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

SSSI water level management plans

Please indicate whether your Board is responsible for any SSSI water level management plans?.....

Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, which ones:

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

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

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

Access to environmental expertise

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

Appropriately skilled Board Members (e.g. Board member from an Environmental Body/Authority)

☐

Co-opted members

☐

Directly employed staff

☒

Contracted persons or consultants

☐

Environmental Partners/NGOs

☐

Other (please describe)

☐

Asset Management

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

ADIS

☐

Paper Records

☒

Other Electronic System

☒

Has your Board continued to undertake visual inspections and update asset databases on an annual basis?

Yes ☒

No ☐

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

54.2

How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

6

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

4.78 cumecs

Health and Safety

Does the Board have a current Health and Safety policy in place?

Yes ☒

No ☐

Does the Board have a responsible officer for Health and Safety?

Yes ☒

No ☐

Have there been any reportable incidents in the past year?

Yes ☐

No ☒

If so, please summarise in the box below:

Guidance and Best Practice

Has your IDB adopted a formal Scheme of Delegation?

Yes ☒ No ☐

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

Governance

☒

Finance

☒

Environment

☒

Health, safety and welfare

☐

Communications and engagement

☐

Other (please describe)

☐

Is your Board's website information current for this financial year? (Board membership, audited accounts, programmes of works, WLMPs, etc).....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your IDB adopted computerised accounting and rating systems?.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your board published all minutes of meetings on the website?.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Does the Board publish information on its website on its approach to maintenance works and provide contact details to allow for and encourage public engagement?

Yes ☒ No ☐

When planning maintenance and capital works are environmental impacts taken into account and wherever possible best practice applied?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your Board adopted the following governance documents?

Standing Orders

Yes ☒ No ☐

Have the Standing Orders been approved by Ministers

Yes ☒ No ☐

Byelaws

Yes ☒ No ☐

If you have Byelaws, have you adopted the latest model byelaws published in

2012.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Have the Byelaws been approved by Ministers.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Code of Conduct for Board Members.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Financial Regulations.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Register of Member's Interests.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Anti-fraud and corruption policy.....

Yes ☒ No ☐

Board membership and attendance

How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	18
Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	7
Number of elected members on the board at year end.	13
Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	5
Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	9
Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	2

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

Complaints procedure

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

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

Public Engagement

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

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

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

0.01%

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

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

Board membership and attendance

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

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

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

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

Section C – Declaration

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

Signature



Date

17/10/2023

Name in BLOCK LETTERS

MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT

Designation

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Email address

sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN 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 met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

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

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

DATE

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chair

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLISHED ADDRESS: WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK - PAGE ADDRESS

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

The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year that ended on the 31st March 2023.

The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year that ended on the 31st March 2023.

b) Risk Management Strategy

Miss Ablett outlined that the Board's Risk Management Strategy had been due an update, that the Clerk had drafted and published an updated strategy for all IDBs clerked by the Middle Level Commissioners. The new strategy will run from 2024 to 2027 and outlines how Members and the Middle Level Commissioners staff govern the Board's risks.

The Board approved their new risk management strategy.

c) Insured Sums

Miss Ablett referred to the insured sums of the pumping stations and reminded the Board of the Clerk's comments in his report, when determining their valuations for insurance purposes Members should recognise the limitations associated with their valuations and the risks, they hold of being underinsured.

Miss Ablett advised she had spoken with the Chairman in advance of the meeting and had been asked to obtain an idea of the cost of increasing the insured sum of each pumping station to £1,000,000. She confirmed these increases would cost in the region of £600.

Discussions followed regarding the valuation of pumping stations and Miss Ablett reported that it was hoped a meeting would soon be arranged with a company, recommended by the Board's insurers, who may be able to assist with the valuation of the pumping stations. She advised that once this meeting had taken place and further information was available this would be reported to the Boards.

Members discussed the insured sums and considered that these should be based on the number of pumps in situ at each pumping station with the value of £1,000,000 placed on each pump until such time more information was made available to the Board. Mr Miscandlon considered the valuations should also be index linked.

RESOLVED

That the pumping station valuations be increased to:

Duncombes pumping station	£2,000,000
Moores pumping station	£1,000,000
Staffurths Bridge pumping station	£2,000,000
Beggars Bridge pumping station	£1,000,000
West Fen pumping station	£1,000,000
White Fen pumping station	£2,000,000

That these sums be index linked from April 2025.

d) Finance Regulations & Finance Code

Miss Ablett reported that the Board's Finance Regulations and Finance Code Policy were due for review and renewal this year. However, she informed the Board that it was intended to carry out a full review of the Middle level Service Provision, the introduction of Key Health Indicators and to start a review of the IDB landscape of drainage boards within the Middle Level. Further, these reviews would also trigger a review of the finance dept. at the Middle Level and all these matters would likely influence areas of delegation regarding finance through the Middle Level offices, it would therefore make sense to retain the current regulations and policy pending a more in-depth review.

RESOLVED

That the Board's current Finance regulations and Finance Code Policy be approved for a further year and the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer be authorised to carry out a full review of both and report at next year's meeting.

e) Review of Internal Controls

Miss Ablett reported that the financial controls that the Middle Level Commissioners have in place in their services to the Board have now been summarised and are available on the Board's web-page.

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

f) Exercise of Public Rights

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

g) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

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

RESOLVED

That there are no such events that would have an adverse financial impact on the Board that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

h) DEFRA IDB1 Return

Miss Ablett referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2022/2023 which the Board noted and approved.

i) Annual Governance Statement

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

B.331 Finance Report: looking back

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	10
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Robert Hill/Sam Ablett

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

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

Finance Officer's review and key messages

For 2023/2024 the Board set a rate of 17.00p to raise £166,500 in agricultural drainage rates and Special Levy against estimated expenditure of £167,969. The rate setting process was centred around the new electricity contract and the uncertainty of the impact of a significant rainfall event. As members will be aware 2023/2024 became an ongoing rainfall event.

A budget monitoring exercise was carried out in January 2024 based on figures to December 2023 which at that point gave an indicative estimate that electricity costs could be in the region of £111,500. Subsequently we had further significant rainfall in January and the wettest February on record. Accounts have now been received from the supplier to February 2024 and an estimate has been made for the month of March 2024 based on meter reads, giving a total cost for the year of £112,059.

During the winter events there were numerous break-downs at pumping station, mainly with regards to weed-screen cleaners for which remedial/emergency repairs were required, these repairs totalled around £15,000. The engineer is now in the process of quantifying what permanent repairs will be required. Other areas of expenditure have been generally in-line with budget provisions.

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

The estimates against which the rate income was raised included the sum of £12,500 for the plant refurbishment fund and as a result of the increases for pumping this has not been achieved in the year.

Over-all this gives a decrease in the Boards General Fund of £66,252 to a balance of £38,342 at 31st March 2024.

These balances are reflected in the Boards financial statements and Annual Return which they are requested to review and approve.

1. Budgeting

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

2. Payments for 2023

- 2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 2

3. Highland Water Contributions

- 3.1 Under Section 57 of Land Drainage Act 1991 the Board can make a claim for funding to the Environment Agency for the additional costs of the onward management of water from the district's highland. It is at the Environment Agency's discretion if they pay the contribution and it is accounted for within the local team's annual maintenance budget.
- 3.2 Following the submission of claims for contributions the gross sum of £1,589.37 (£2,365.53 less £776.16 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) has been received from the Environment Agency for the financial year 2022/2023 based on the Board's actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year and the sum of £982.66 in respect of 80% of the Board's estimated expenditure for the financial year 2023/24.

4. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2023/2024:**4.1 Annual Return 2023/2024:**

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

Author Name: Robert Hill/Sam Ablett

Role: Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Budget Review

Appendix 2 Payments for 2023/24

Appendix 3 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2023/24

Appendix 1

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024

	<u>Approved budget</u>	<u>Actual to</u>	<u>Forecast to</u>	
	<u>2023/2024</u>	<u>31.12.2023</u>	<u>31.03.2024</u>	
	£	£	£	
1 Labour	6,780	1,056	6,780	
2 Telephone and insurances	3,250	3,216	3,250	
3 Repairs and renewals	10,750	14,214	17,000	- Includes additional repairs at p/s - £6,200
4 Fuel	45,500	87,889	111,500	- <u>Electricity</u> ESTIMATED ONLY - see covering letter
5 Drainworks (Including Environmental measures)	57,750	47,742	52,750	
6 Administration charge, Health & Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc	18,250	8,003	18,100	
7 Loan Charges	0	0	0	
8 Plant refurbishing funding	12,500	9,375	12,500	Assessment of General Fund and any transfer to be made for year-end accounts.
9 Improvement works	0	0	0	
9 Environment Agency - Precept	16,871	16,871	16,871	
	171,651	188,366	236,751	
LESS Deposit Accounts interest etc	3,682	5,093	6,193	
	167,969	183,273	232,558	
Rate requirement	17.12 p	18.68 p	23.70 p	
Rates raised 2023/2024	17.00 p	£166,500		

Appendix 2

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDPayments 2023/2024 (1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024)

Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety Re-charge 2022-2023 (Account from COPE Safety Management)	213.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and travelling	9,383.90
Middle Level Commissioners - Telemetry installation at pumping stations (net of 50% grant-in-aid)	19,428.49
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution towards retirement gift for clerk	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Remedial health & safety works to steps (Duncombes pumping station)	535.69
Middle Level Commissioners - Bank trimming works and assist machine cleansing	2,906.95
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (West Fen pumping station)	11,233.75
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (Beggars Bridge pumping station)	599.30
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2022/23, planning and development applications)	3,296.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Attend site, replace motor overload and fit panel heater thermostat (Moores pumping station)	1,384.05
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to pump 2 and installation of panel heater thermostat (Duncombes pumping station)	4,232.47
Middle Level Commissioners - Installation of panel heater thermostat and test operation of pumps (West Fen pumping station)	375.99
Middle Level Commissioners - Installation of panel heater thermostat (Staffurths Bridge pumping station)	180.77
Environment Agency - Precept	8,435.65
Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscription 2023	1,098.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,389.35
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	300.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Expenses in connection with Board meeting	63.90
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees - (Development application - Mr D Betts)	378.14
Middle Level Commissioners - Removal of rubbish from drain at Tesco and trim both sides of drain	469.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Bank charges (refunded)	10.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (Duncombes pumping station)	4,501.03
PKF Littlejohns LLP - Audit Fee (2022-2023 accounts)	504.00
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Bank charges (refunded)	10.00
R J Dale - Flail mowing	5,985.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	2,049.82
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges	8,714.82
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2022-2023 accounts)	996.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,275.11
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	173.04
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	3,416.74
Bank charges - card replacements	40.00
R J Dale - Flail mowing	3,945.90
Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (White Fen pumping station)	306.48
Middle Level Commissioners - Chemical weed control of District drains	2,443.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Fit new low level relay and test (Moores pumping station)	232.25
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (West Fen pumping station)	345.18
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (Staffurths Bridge pumping station)	367.93
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	259.20
Environment Agency - Precept	8,435.65

Carlile's Nursery & Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting at pumping stations	330.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment, production of Board report, planning and development applications)	994.50
B J Plant Hire Ltd - Drain maintenance and bank revetment works	25,764.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,448.15
Middle Level Commissioners - Preparation of highland water claims	54.84
B J Plant Hire Ltd - Drain maintenance	3,732.00
R J Dale - Flail mowing	2,281.20
R J Dale - Flail mowing	1,787.40
R Dring - Pumping Station duties - White Fen pumping station	1,056.00
Information Commissioner - Data Protection Registration renewal	40.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (White Fen Bridge pumping station)	293.18
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment and telemetry (Duncombes Bridge pumping station)	904.10
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to tec reel on automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment (Beggars Bridge pumping station)	813.38
Middle Level Commissioners - Clearing of weed and checking pump (West Fen Pumping Station)	113.04
Middle Level Commissioners - Replace PLC card (West Fen Pumping Station)	1,720.44
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Environmental Officer)	752.75
Middle Level Commissioners - Piling at reach 90-91	7,973.61
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	440.10
Association of Drainage Authorities (River Great Ouse branch) - Subscription 2022-2023	30.00
H W Whittome - Pumping Station duties 2023/2024 - Staffurths Bridge pumping station	1,267.00
H T Kisby - Pumping station duties 2023/2024 - Moores pumping station	1,056.00
M J Mottram - Pumping Station duties 2023/2024 - West Fen pumping station	1,056.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Free off syphon and flap door (Staffurths Bridge pumping station)	285.13
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2023/24, planning and development applications)	4,395.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	3,316.96
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and travelling	9,373.91
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,448.15
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Duncombe pumping station)	2,903.74
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Moores pumping station)	165.66
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Staffurths Bridge pumping station)	3,135.54
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (Beggars Bridge pumping station)	1,009.00
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (West Fen pumping station)	1,295.01
Corona Energy - Electricity Supply - (White Fen pumping station)	1,114.26
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Duncombe pumping station)	847.98
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Moores pumping station)	163.46
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Staffurths Bridge pumping station)	756.99
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (Beggars Bridge pumping station)	362.86
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (West Fen pumping station)	639.53
Anglia Farmers - Electricity Supply - (White Fen pumping station)	533.13
	<u>197,320.75</u>

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

MARCH WEST AND WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES ACCOUNT

2024			2023		
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year:-		Apr-01	Balance brought forward	57,318.06
	General Fund	0.00	2024		
	Middle Level fees	0.00	Mar-31	Receipts	0.00
	Transfer to General Fund	0.00		Write Back of Provisions	0.00
				Interest	690.35
	Balance carried forward	58,008.41			
		<u>58,008.41</u>			<u>58,008.41</u>

PLANT REFURBISHMENT FUND

2024			2023		
Mar-31	Plant Improvements -		Apr-01	Balance brought forward	39,376.94
	Loan Charges	0.00	2024		
	Telemetry	0.00	Mar-31		
	Repairs to Weedscreen Cleaner	0.00		Funds raised 2023/2024	0.00
	Duncombes pump replacement	0.00			
	Balance carried forward	39,851.21		Interest	474.27
		<u>39,851.21</u>			<u>39,851.21</u>

FUTURE WORKS ACCOUNT

2024			2023		
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year	0.00	Apr-01	Balance brought forward	0.00
	Transfer to General Fund	0.00	2024		
	Balance carried forward	0.00	Mar-31	Receipts	0.00
		<u>0.00</u>			<u>0.00</u>

March West & White Fen Internal Drainage Board**Treasurers Account 2023/2024**

1st April 2023		31st March 2024	
Balance brought forward	245,434.63	Payments made during the year	197,320.75
31st March 2024			
Receipts during the year			
Clerk's collection account	195,766.42		
Interest on deposit accounts	2,377.31		
	<u>198,143.73</u>	Balance carried forward	246,257.61
	<u>443,578.36</u>		<u>443,578.36</u>

National Savings Account 2022/2023

1st April 2023		31st March 2024	
Balance brought forward	6,082.51	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2024			
Interest on deposit accounts	47.06	Balance carried forward	6,129.57
	<u>6,129.57</u>		<u>6,129.57</u>

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2024**Barclays Bank PLC**Clients Current Account - 13350509

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2024	3,619.44
Less unrepresented cheques:-	0.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	<u>3,619.44</u>

Clients Current Account - 33059510

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2024				50,000.00
Less unrepresented cheques	2023/33	26/03/2024	1,056.00	
	2023/34	27/03/2024	<u>18,819.15</u>	
				19,875.15
Add outstanding lodgements				0.00
Balance per Trial Balance				<u>30,124.85</u>
				<u>33,744.29</u>

Cash balances as at 31st March 2024**Barclays Bank PLC**

Current Account - 13350509	3,619.44
Current Account - 33059510	30,124.85
Business Premium Account	212,513.32

246,257.61**National Savings**

Investment Account per passbook	6,129.57
---------------------------------	-----------------

Total reconciled cash balances per accounts **252,387.18**

March West & White Fen IDB**Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return****Financial year ended 31st March 2024****Per Annual
Return**

<u>Line 1</u>	<u>Balances brought forward</u> General Fund Development Charges Account Plant Refurbishment Fund	104,593.42 57,318.06 39,376.94 201,288.42	201,288
<u>Line 2</u>	<u>Rates and Special Levies</u> Agricultural rates Special Levies Penalty Costs Write-off	117,607.64 49,398.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 167,005.64	167,006
<u>Line 3</u>	<u>Total other receipts</u> Interest General fund Development charges account Plant refurbishment fund Consent applications Wayleave Discharge contributions Grazing Highland Water Loan Advance Write Back of Overprovision Miscellaneous income	 1,259.75 690.35 474.27 0.00 11.92 0.00 5.00 2,526.33 0.00 100.01 0.00 5,067.63	5,068
<u>Line 4</u>	<u>Staff costs</u> Wages/salaries National insurance contributions Pension costs Travelling expenses	 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00	0
<u>Line 5</u>	<u>Loan repayments</u> PWLB - Principal PWLB - Interest	 0.00 0.00 0.00	0

March West & White Fen IDB**Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return****Financial year ended 31st March 2024**

<u>Line 6</u>	All other payments Precept Rates, insurances, telephones Repairs and renewals Fuel Drainworks Contractors charges Administration Development charges fees Refurbishment works Plant Improvements	16,871.30 3,216.34 28,092.22 112,059.15 52,418.18 6,547.00 17,957.38 0.00 0.00 0.00 237,161.57	237,162
<u>Line 7</u>	Balances carried forward General Fund Development Charges Account Plant Refurbishment Fund	38,340.50 58,008.41 39,851.21 136,200.12	136,200
Reconciliation			
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6		136,200.12	
Balances carried forward			
Per Annual return		136,200.00	

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	231,944	201,288	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	142,054	167,006	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	18,846	5,068	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	5,213	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	186,343	237,162	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	201,288	136,200	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	251,517	252,387	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,444,200	3,444,200	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

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

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

Date 12/04/2024

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and approved the key finance messages by Mr Hill.

Budgeting

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.

Payments 2023/2024

The Board considered and approved the Payments for 2023/2024

(NB: Messrs Brown and Whittome declared interests in all matters concerning the Middle level Commissioners as members of the Middle level Board.)

(NB: Messrs Mottram and Whittome declared interests in the payments made to them.)

Annual Accounts and Annual Return 2023/2024

The Board considered and approved the Annual Accounts and Finance Papers for 2023/24, and authorised the Chairman to complete and sign the Annual Return 2023/24.

B.332 Finance report: looking forward

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	11
Meeting:	MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD
Date:	Tuesday 7 th May 2024	Officer Responsible:	Robert Hill/Sam Ablett

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

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

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

For the rating estimates for 2024/2025 standard provisions have been made for general expenditure with specific items included where known. The engineers estimates have been included for the drain maintenance programme.

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

The engineer has identified a number of significant works likely to be required during the year:

Duncombes pumping station

Inspect/replace pump no.2 -	£30,000
Repairs/o/haul weed-screen cleaner -	£15,000

West Fen pumping station:

Repairs to weed-screen cleaner -	£3,000
Repairs to auto-level controller -	£5,000

White Fen pumping station:

Repair/replace power factor capacitors -	£5,000
--	--------

The Board are asked to review and approve these works as recommended by the engineer.

When considering the rate for 2024/2025 the Board need to take into consideration they have six pumping stations, generally with ageing equipment which until refurbished/replaced is likely to incur ongoing high-cost remedial interventions.

To provide 'emergency in year' funding for cash flow and/or for the major works the Board are asked to authorise an loan facility with the Public Works Loan Board. Based on these estimates a loan of £100,000 repayable over 10 years would be sufficient, although the Board should base any requirements on the outcome of discussions and approvals at the meeting. The current indicative cost of repayments against a loan of this nature is around £13,000 per year, although the terms of any loan taken are fixed at the time of draw-down.

The budget proposal includes for the recovery of balances depleted during winter 2023/2024 pumping. When considering the rate for 2024/2025 members should also consider likely future capital investment requirements at the pumping stations. A full District Wide catchment study is programmed for the next financial year.

As a result of the significant reduction on balances and the proposal to recover these over a three-year period the rate requirement shown of 24.0p is the minimum that should be considered.

1. Fees, Remunerations and Subscriptions

- 1.1 Subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) will increase by 6.5%, from £915 to £975.
- 1.2 To consider the payments in respect of pumping station duties.

2. Precept to the Environment Agency

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

- 2.2 The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 3% for 2024
- 2.3 The precept for 2022/2023 was £16,380.
- 3. Determination of land for rating purposes, rate arrears and contributions from developers – Confidential papers**
- 4. Estimates for 2024/25**
- 4.1 The estimated budget for 2024/25 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 2024/25**
- 5.1 Appendix 2 details the rate requirement that needs to be set and approved by the Board in order to raise sufficient rate and special levy income to cover the budget estimate.
- 5.2 Board Members are welcome to propose alternative rate requirements and invite these for consideration by the Board along with their supporting rationale and proposed mechanism for catering within the budget estimate and/or the Board's investment strategy.

Author Name: Robert Hill/Sam Ablett

Role: Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

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

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

Appendix 1

MARCH WEST & WHITE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET 2024/2025

	<u>Approved budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>		
	<u>2023/2024</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>	<u>2024/2025</u>		
	£	£	£		
1 Labour	6,780	6,547	7,040	A - Includes estimate for increased premiums	
2 Telephone and insurances	3,250 ^A	3,216	3,525 ^A	B - Includes for over-winter repairs/maintenance at pumping stations	15,300
3 Repairs and renewals	10,750	28,092 ^B	29,450 ^C	C - Includes for identified works: West Fen pumping station White Fen pumping station	
4 Fuel	45,500	112,059 ^D	62,800 ^E		
5 Drainworks (including Environmental measures)	57,750	52,418	66,500 ^F	D - Includes accounts to February, estimated for March	
6 Administration charge, Health & Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc	18,250	17,957	18,950	E - Provision based on increased annual pumped volume and estimate for new contract rates from October 2024	
7 Loan Charges	0	0	13,000 ^G	F - Includes engineers items	60,435
8 Plant refurbishing funding	12,500	0	0	G - Provision for 'emergency loan funding' - PWLB - £100k repayable 10 years	
9 Improvement works	0	0	45,000 ^H	H - Provision for works at Duncombes p/s: Pump replacement - Weed-screen cleaner overhaul -	30,000 15,000
9 Environment Agency - Precept	16,871	16,871	17,377	I - Provision for reinstatement of balances reduced by winter 23/24 pumping	
10 Reinstatement of balances - Yr 1 of 3	0	0	22,084 ^I	J - Includes loan funding for improvement works -	45,000
	171,651	237,162	285,726		
LESS Deposit Accounts interest etc	3,682	3,903	50,219 ^J		
	167,969	233,259	235,507		

Appendix 2March West & White Fen Internal Drainage BoardCombined rate for amalgamated BoardRate and levy requirements

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2024/2025 is:-

- a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 70.07%
- b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to Fenland District Council – 29.93%.

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £6,876.

In 2024/2025 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £9,813

Estimated Revenue balance in hand on 31st March 2024 - £38,341

The estimated net expenditure of £235,507 in 2024/2025 which does not include provision towards the pump overhaul/plant refurbishment programme, is equivalent to:-

- a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 24.00p and
- b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £70,480

In 2023/2024 a rate 17.00p in the £ was raised together with a Special Levy of £49,398 on Fenland District Council.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Board

April 2024

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered & approved the key finance messages of Mr Hill.

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions:i) ADA subscription

Approve continued membership of ADA with payment of £975 to be paid.

ii) Pumping Station Duties

That the Board agree a total sum of up to £7,037 being an increase of 7.53%, be allowed for the services of the Pumping Station Attendants for 2024/2025.

(NB: Messrs Mottram and Whittome declared a financial interest when this item was discussed.

iii) Determination of land for rating purposes, rate arrears and contributions from developers

The Board agreed to the determination of land for rating purposes and associated write off of rate arrears and noted the contributions received from developers, covered within the confidential item.

iv) Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2024/25

Miss Ablett advised that when considering the rating estimates, the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2024/2025, the Board should note the comments made by the Finance Officer in his report, and asked the Board to be sure they were comfortable with the estimates made.

Miss Ablett reported that due to exceptional pumping costs and repairs over the winter the Boards general fund balance had reduced significantly by £66,252 to £38,341. She advised that in order to provide "emergency in year" funding for cash flow and/or for the major works, members may wish to consider authorising a loan facility with the Public Works Loan Board. Miss Ablett further advised that based on the estimates, a loan of £100,000 repayable over 10 years would be sufficient and the current indicative cost of repayments was around £13,000 per year. She reported that the terms of any loan facility were fixed at the time of draw down.

Members discussed the estimates, rate requirements and potential loan funding.

It was agreed the Board had to be responsible in view of its depleted funds and potential capital requirements and therefore a loan application be made up to the sum of £150,000 over a maximum term of 10 years and the rate be increased from 17p to 24p.

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2024/2025 and were informed by the Clerk that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 70.07% and 29.93%.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That a loan application be made up to the sum of £150,000 over a maximum term of 10 years
- iii) That a total sum of £235,507 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
- iv) That a rate of 24p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the district.
- v) That a Special levy of £70,480 be made and issued to the Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure

- v) 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 iv).
- vi) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.333 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That the next Meeting of the Board be held on Tuesday 6th May 2025 at 10am at the Middle Level Offices.

B.334 Any Other Business

Mr Brown reported there were a number of IDB Board Members who had agreed to join a focus group with regards to potentially considering the amalgamation of Internal Drainage Boards, with a view to having fewer Boards, but with a larger area. He enquired whether this Board should commence negotiations with others prior to the outcome from the focus group, as he was aware the Board had been approached by one Board with a view to discussions concerning amalgamation.

The Chairman reported that discussions with Ransonmoor DDC had not progressed as he was waiting for the findings from the focus group, and a meeting date of the group had not yet been fixed.

Miss Alerton confirmed that no date had yet been arranged due to the wet weather, which had resulted in farmers trying to catch up with outstanding works. She advised that it was hoped a meeting would be arranged for some time in June.

The Chairman considered the Board should wait until the outcome of the meeting of the focus group.

Mr Brown advised the outcome from the meeting would likely be discussed at the Chairmans' meeting then potentially put to the Boards next year.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date