

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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13th June 2025

Dear Board Members

Upcoming VIRTUAL meeting of the Board Wednesday 25th June 2025

Please find overleaf the agenda for the meeting of the Board to be hosted virtually via TEAMS at 9.30am on Wednesday 25th June 2025.

The link for the above meeting has been emailed out to you on 10th June 2025.

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

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

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

Yours truly

P BURROWS, FCIWEM C.WEM CEnv

Clerk to the Board

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Wednesday 25th June 2025 – 9.30am

Via TEAM's

Agenda:

Item No	Topic	Format	Lead
1	Welcome & apologies	Verbal	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	Verbal	Chair
3	Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Pages 3 - 9	Chair
3a	Transfer of Service Provision	Pages 10 - 12	Clerk
4	Environment Officers report	Pages	Clerk
5	Governance • Risk Management Assessment/Strategy • Insurance • Review updated Policy Statement • Review of internal controls • Exercise of Public Rights • Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments • IDB1 • Annual Governance Statement	Pages 13 - 15 Pages 16 - 21 Pages 22 - 32 Page 33	
6	Finance Report • Finance Officer's Review • Budget review • Payments for 2024/2025 • Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2024/2025 • Annual Return 2024/2025	Page 34 Page 35 Page 36 Pages 37 – 39 Page 40	Clerk
7	Date of Next Meeting – Friday 16 th January 2026 at 10.30am	Verbal	Chair
8	Any other business	Verbal	Chair

(NB: If required for any agenda item:

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

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Bluntisham IDB

Held at the Cambs Site Office, Brice Aggregates at Needingworth Quarry on 17th January 2025

PRESENT

J Anderson (Chair)
P Burgess (Vice-Chair)
W Green

J Neish (HDC)
C Wisson

Paul Burrows the Clerk was in attendance. The Chairman welcomed Matt Ball and Scott McCloud from Brice Aggregates who joined the meeting in an observer capacity.

Apologies for absence

All were present, accounting for the resignation of H Law and C Hudson.

B.931 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board. No new or specific interests were declared.

B.932 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 25th June 2024. are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

None raised

B.933 Constitution & Membership

P Burrows summarised the Board's composition and reported on the two vacancies resulting from H Law and C Hudson's resignations from the Board. He added that Huntingdonshire District Council had eligibility to appoint 7 members and currently choose to appoint 1.

S McCloud from Brice Aggregates clarified that they were recruiting a land manager who when appointed would become their link to the IDB and be put forward for membership of the Board.

B.934 Clerk's Report

The Board considered the report and its content. P Burrows outlined the rationalise for the Middle Level Commissioners issuing notice of removal of services from Bluntisham IDB and others outside the Middle Level. The Chairman reported that discussions had been held, in conjunction with other IDBs, with two prospective suppliers. He reported that one tender had been received and one was awaited. P Burrows clarified that once the future supplier is known then a transition plan would need to be developed between the three parties.

P Burrows outlined the latest position with Highland Water and the high likelihood that the Environment Agency will not meet full claims this year with the prognosis for a greater shortfall in

2025/26 onwards. He added that for Bluntisham IDB the 2024/25 shortfall was £387 with the Environment Agency paying 84% of the claim, however the predicted shortfall for 2025/26 was for £1220 which is 46% of any claim. He added that this would equate to 23% of the Board's drain maintenance expenditure any therefore has significant consequences for the Board.

P Burrows reminded the Board that in terms of electricity use at their pumping station they had not been billed for many years. He reminded the Board that provision has been made within the accounts with a repayment fund being managed so there are funds available when any bill is received. He asked the Board what they want to do about resolving the issue and asked whether Brice Aggregates may be paying the bill. P Burgess clarified that the electrification of the pumping station happened before the quarry infrastructure was developed so the feeds will be separate. The Chairman decided that he would undertake some site investigations. P Burrows asked that if the Board wishes for the clerk to write to UK Power Networks then the Chairman should issue an instruction accordingly.

RESOLVED

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

Delegated that the clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman, to decide on whether to appeal the IDB Precept under s40 of the Water Resources Act.

In terms of the Fens Reservoir, the Board approved that the Board act as one with the Middle Level Commissioners and other impacted IDBs. Therefore, the Middle Level Commissioners staff, consultants and legal service provider are authorised to act on behalf of and represent the Board.

The Board acknowledged that the Fens Reservoir DCO may need to overwrite/disallow existing statutory powers held by the Board and delegate the decision making on this to the Clerk, engaging with the Chairman/Vice Chairman as he sees fit.

B.935 Environment Officers' Report

P Burrows outlined that the Chairman had not been able to join a Chairmans' session for all MLC administered IDBs before Christmas where Sofi Lloyd the Ecological & Environmental Services Manager had provided a verbal update on the work that had taken place over recent months to improve the management of the collective environmental risk of the MLC and local IDBs.

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

He added that the minimum service package developed for the Board by the Middle Level Commissioners could be used by the Board within negotiations and agreements with their future service provider. He asked whether discussions so far had included for environmental, engineering and M&E services to which the Chairman responded they had not.

B.936 Consulting Engineers' Reports

The Board noted the Engineer's report considered the report from the M&E Engineer. P Burrows summarised that the pumping station is considered in a mechanically and electrically satisfactory condition, however the pump and control panels are of an age where reliability is a concern. He added that the station steel piles are heavily corroded, having completely corroded through in places and the seals are leaking. He added that the pump is more than 20 years old and there is no record of any previous overhaul so it has exceeded its expected lifespan.

C Wisson enquired about the upward trend in pump hours and whether that was a reflection of climate change and increased surface water? W Green added that the pump has been behaving and the Chairman concluded that the Board better get saving, reflecting on the current value of the Asset Improvements fund being £42,100.

J Neish enquired as to liability should the station fail, flooding occur and the Board has insufficient funds to resolve. P Burrows responded that whilst the responsibilities of the Board are permissive, the Board as a collective have a responsibility for its decision making and investment approach.

P Burgess added that if there was a failure it would be Brice Aggregates who would be directly impacted as happened in 2013 along with one property close to the Pike and Eel.

S McCloud enquired about the maintenance and inspection approach at the station as Brice Aggregates have many M&E assets on site, including pumps and dewatering equipment. P Burrows suggested there may be opportunity here for a more local approach to the maintenance and improvements works needs at the station, especially when Brice have a member on the Board. The Chairman asked whether he could have any information MLC has on the pump so he could work with Brice to scope. P Burgess also agreed to approach P Burton (ex Chairman) to see if he holds records. It was suggested a sub-committee be formed with the Chairman, Lattenbury Services and Brice Aggregates to develop proposals and report to the Board.

P Burrows added that if Brice Aggregates are the main beneficiary of the Board's operations, then to lever any government grant there would be an expectation of a proportionate funding contribution from them, therefore it would be in their interest to work proactively with or as part of the Board.

RESOLVED

MLC M&E Engineer to provide the Chairman with copies of its records and a sub-committee be formed of the Chairman, Lattenbury Service and Brice Aggregates to establish and scope whether there is an opportunity for a more locally managed approach to its M&E inspection, maintenance, improvement work and contingency plan needs.

B.937 Health & Safety

The Chairman summarised the report from COPE and agreed to sort the signage recommendations out himself on behalf of the Board.

B.938 Brice Aggregates Update

S McCloud outlined that Brice Aggregates were currently still in a setting up and streamlining mode having taken over the operation and site.

B.939 Governance

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

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

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

b) Review of Internal Controls

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

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

c) Authorisations

The Board considered the review of authorisations.

RESOLVED

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

e) Responsible Finance Officer

RESOLVED

The Board considered and approved the recommendations that:

- i) That the role of the position of Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners is to include the appointment as Responsible Financial Officer to the Board.
- ii) That the person appointed as Head of Finance for the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and authorised to sign cheques and authorised to make payments on behalf of the Board.
- iii) That the Chairman and Vice-Chair be approved to be added to the Barclays Bank Plc mandate.
- iv) That the person appointed as clerk to the Middle Level Commissioners be added to the Barclays Bank PLC mandate and be authorised to sign cheques and to authorise payments on behalf of the Board.
- v) That the person appointed as Head of Finance to the Middle Level Commissioners will be appointed as the administrator on behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners to the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Middle Level Commissioners.
- vi) That following Mr Robert Hill leaving the employment of the Middle Level Commissioners that the Head of Finance of the Middle Level Commissioners be

delegated the authority to appoint a member of the finance team to be an additional administrator on the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform as used by the Board.

f) Insurance Valuations

The Board noted the current valuation, supporting a continued approach to index link with a cap of a £350 increase in any year.

g) Policy Reviews & DPO

The Board considered the review of the policies.

RESOLVED

- i) The Board considered and approved the policy reviews for the Complaints Procedure, Privacy policy and the Anti-Bribery policy.
- ii) The Board considered and approved adoption of updated Finance Regulations covering the period 2025-2035.
- iii) That the Board approve that while there is a service level agreement for provision of clerking services in place between the Board and the Middle Level Commissioners, the Middle Level Commissioner's Lead Clerk acts as their Data Protection Officer.

i) Exercise of Public Rights

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

j) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

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

RESOLVED

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

B.940 Finance Report – Looking Back

The Board note the report and approved all payments.

B.941 Finance Report – Looking Forward

The Board considered the paper from their Responsible Finance Officer and P Burrows summarised his assessment of the Board's financial position as follows.

The Board currently has reserves of approximately 50% of annual expenditure which is considered in itself an unhealthy position and a significant risk. Additionally, there is no investment plan for the

Board's pumping station and only £42,100 in their Asset Improvement Fund with no funds being budgeted annually to add to this. The Board is unlikely to be eligible for significant amounts of government grant, even if grant were available. Currently a £100,000 public works loan repayable over 10 years would cost £13,500 per annum in repayments – equivalent of approximately a 10p rate increase – with a total repayment of £130,000. £140,000 may be insufficient to fund the Board's needs over the short and medium term. The budget estimate proposed today requires a 5.5p increase in rate which is approximately a 30% increase. The Board's financial health and previous financial decision making may risk their eligibility for a Public Works Loan as the lender needs to consider the security of the repayments.

The Chairman reported that he was comfortable with the proposed drain maintenance and electricity provisions having spoken to the outgoing Responsible Finance Officer within the preparation of this recommended budget. P Burrows added that the estimated budget accounts for the potential shortfall in Highland Water income and has no provision for topping up the Board's Asset Improvement Fund.

C Wisson reflected that the accounts had circa £92,000 held in the Asset Improvement Fund and for repayment of electricity, which is not much. The Chairman added we did not know how much was needed and that as part of the M&E scoping with Brice estimated values should be developed to inform the Board.

The Chairman reflected that the Board in the past may have been too stingy in its rate setting and that there was a balance between steady increases and step-change increases, adding that they needed to start to put money aside for improvements. J Neish reported on the issue nationally with Special Levy but that he saw no option for the Board given its position.

The Chairman proposed that the Board set a rate of 22.250p. P Burrows added that this would be contrary to the preceding remark about needing to put money aside for improvements. P Burgess added that this was a big jump in rate. The Chairman summarised that it was indeed a maintenance position, keeping the Board level, adding whether its wise to bite the bullet now or wait until something goes wrong and then act reactively, if its affordable.

P Burgess seconded the proposed rate of 22.250p and this was carried unanimously.

The Board 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 33.80% and 66.20%.

RESOLVED

- a) To continue to subscribe to be a member of the Association of Drainage Authorities.
- b) No change in fee associated with pumping station duties for 2025/26.
- c) Drainage rates:
 - i) That the estimates be approved.
 - ii) That a total sum of £31,121 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
 - iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £10,520 and £20,601 respectively.
 - iv) That a rate of 22.25p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

- v) That a Special levy of £20,601 be made and issued to Huntingdonshire District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies and to the special levy referred to in resolution (v).
- vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.942 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That next meetings of the Board be held on 25th June 2025 via MS Teams and then Friday 16th January 2026 – 10:30 at Cambs Site Office, Brice Aggregates at Needingworth Quarry.

B.943 Any Other Business

None raised

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	3a
Meeting:	BLUNTISHAM IDB	Subject:	TRANSFER OF SERVICE PROVISION
Date:	Wednesday 25 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows Clerk to the IDB and MLC Chief Executive

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Confirm their approval of their future service provider arrangements by minute at a quorate board meeting.
- B. Review and approve the resolutions in Section 3 of this paper to enable the effective transfer of services to the nominated future service provider(s).

1. Recap

- 1.1 In July 2024, the Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) provided notice of a re-focussing of their service provision to local Internal Drainage Boards.
- 1.2 As a result, they issued notice to this Board that their service offer would discontinue and that the IDB would need to source an alternative service provider(s) to come into effect from 1st April 2026 at the latest. This covers all the services currently provided by MLC, i.e. clerking (admin, governance and finance), environment, M&E, planning & consenting, operations, survey, GIS and capital works.
- 1.3 The Middle Level Commissioners will conclude the year-end accounts and annual returns for the IDB for 2025/26, which happens after 1st April 2026. It should be acknowledged that there may be certain pieces of work or activities that need to continue after this date as part of a transition plan.
- 1.4 This Board have now confirmed that the following service provider(s) will be managing board affairs moving forward and they have agreed the service provider(s) relevant terms of engagement.

Service	Organisation
Clerking (inc Office functions, Finance, Governance, Insurance & Utilities)	further to board decision (Recommendation A)
Environmental	further to board decision (Recommendation A)
M&E	further to board decision (Recommendation A) or N/A where there are no M&E assets
Planning & Consenting	further to board decision (Recommendation A)
Capital Works and other Technical Services	further to board decision (Recommendation A)

2. Transition

- 2.1 Transition arrangements are to be completed by the 1st of April 2026 and will include elements set out in section 3 of this report. MLC and new service provider will work together to deliver these throughout the 2025/2026 financial year.
- 2.2 A year end/start handover is preferable to an in-year handover. However, an in-year transfer of some aspects of service provision may be practical.

3. Resolutions

- 3.1 The Board is asked to review and approve the following resolutions to enable the effective transfer of services and to manage their risks and those of the respective suppliers:

Ref	Theme	Resolution
A	Clerkship	That the position of clerk to the IDB transfer from Middle Level Commissioners to the approved future service provider at or as close to 1 st April 2026 as possible and the provision of clerkship services begin from that date.
B	Finance	That the RFO from the approved future service provider be added to the Barclays Bank PLC Mandate and authorised to sign cheques and authorised to make payments on behalf of the Board. Once handover of Financial services is complete, then MLC staff are resolved to be removed from the mandate and authorisations. The Board also approve to change banks, if required, by the new service provider.
C	Finance	That the RFO from the approved future service provider be added as an additional administrator to the Barclays Bank PLC internet banking platform and once handover of Financial services is complete, they will become the primary administrator and MLC staff are resolved to be removed as administrators.
D	Finance	That the position of Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) to the IDB in transferred from the Middle Level Commissioners' Head of Finance to the RFO of the approved future service provider at or as close to 1 st April 2026 as possible and the provision of clerkship services begin from that date. At this point the Board will need to adopt new Financial Regulations and Internal Controls.
E	Finance	That at the point of handover, the IDB are removed from the Middle Level Commissioners group banking arrangements with Barclays Bank PLC.
F	Finance	That the Middle Level Commissioners will finalise and submit accounts for 2025/26 and the IDB1 return.
G	Finance	That the preparation of 2026/27 budget estimates and rate assessment be developed by both parties, but any meetings and decisions made after the position of clerk has been handed-over be led by the approved future service provider. The issuing and collection of drainage rates for 2026/27 along with collection of past debt will be undertaken by the new service provider after handover of banking arrangements and the RFO role.
H	Finance	That the Board's internal audit services move from the Middle Level Commissioners' group arrangements with Whittings LLP to that as agreed with the approved future service provider as of April 2026.
I	Clerkship	That the approved future service provider provides a named person who becomes a shadow Data Protection Officer on behalf of the Board alongside the Lead Clerk of the Middle Level Commissioners and that both parties are considered as 'Data Handlers' on behalf of the Board who is 'Data Controller'.
J	Clerkship	Once handover of all data and information for all areas of service provision has been completed, then the person nominated in I above becomes the Board's sole Data Protection Officer.

K	Clerkship	That the Board authorise their 'Data Handlers' to transfer all relevant data and information, including personal data and any operational information held.
L	Clerkship	Authorise the approved future service provider to develop a shadow webpage for the Board and the removal of the MLC hosted webpage once clerkship services have transferred. At this point the Board approve to adopt their new supplier's Privacy Policy and Complaints Procedure with the new supplier being the new public and partner point of contact for the Board at this point for all incoming/outgoing correspondence.
M	Clerkship	Other than the Board's Financial Regulations, Internal Controls, Privacy Policy and Complaints Procedure, the Board's other existing policies will remain in place until new or adapted policies are proposed by their new suppliers.
N	Clerkship	That the Board will remain within the Middle Level Commissioners Group insurance policy until they are included within their new suppliers' arrangements.
O	Clerkship	Where relevant the Board will remain within the Middle Level Commissioners group approach to electricity contract arrangements (current contract ends Sept 2025) until they are included within their new suppliers' arrangements. The Board recognise this may be before or after 1 st April 2026.
P	Governance	The Board will adopt the model Reserved Matters, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation of the new service provider from 1 April 2026.
Q	H&S	The IDB H&S lead and the new service provider will let the MLC know, if appropriate to the IDB, whether the current services of COPE Safety Management as advisors to the Board (within MLC Group arrangements with COPE) will continue or whether there will be a new approach. The IDB H&S lead will inform the new service provider of all details relating to any near miss, learning events, or other relevant Health and Safety related events or information pertaining to the IDB and its operation.
R	Capital Works	The MLC will provide transfer all details and IPR relating to capital projects and their management and admin underway or in a medium-term plan for the IDB and will inform the Environment Agency and DEFRA of the change of service provider where required.
S	Other Services	That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the board are authorised to agree with the MLC Chief Executive and/or Chief Engineer and the approved future service provider to the transition arrangements (including timescales and fees) associated with the transition of M&E, Environmental, Planning & Consenting, Capital Works and other Technical Services.
T	Finance	That payroll functions for the Board's employee will transfer and their pension arrangements will transfer from MLC to the new service provider. As the employee is employed by the Board and not the MLC, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) – TUPE – does not apply.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 With resolutions in place, existing and approved future service provider(s) can undertake the transition and handover with confidence and with risk managed.
- 4.2 Timescales, handover dates and associated issues will be reported to the Chairman and tabled at future meetings of the Board. Special meetings of the Board may be required.

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	BLUNTISHAM	Subject:	ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT
Date:	25/06/2025	Officer Responsible:	Sofi Lloyd

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Note the updated Environmental Services Package will take effect from April 2025.
- B. Be informed that an environmental review and Biodiversity Action Plan update meeting is still outstanding following postponement in Feb. We are keen to discuss this ASAP so please contact the office to book a convenient date.
- C. Note that the new Hedgerow Regulations 2024 prohibits the cutting of any hedge growing on agricultural land between the 1st March - 31st August inclusive.
- D. Please contact the ecology team ASAP to book a survey of any trees that require felling or trimming this year as this is the best time of year to survey for bats.
- E. Be reminded that any non-routine maintenance including bank slip repairs or reprofiling, culvert installation or replacements, tree felling, established scrub removal and channel de-watering require environmental screening well ahead of the planned works, to ensure works are compliant, using the request form available on the MLC website: [Conservation – Middle Level](#)
- F. Be aware that you will require licenced supervision of certain works that take place around badger setts, which MLC can provide.
- G. Note that a Board Representative will be required to attend a biodiversity training day in 2025. Those who have some control over the works undertaken within the district is best placed to attend.
- H. A reminder that the Board has a culverting policy and a presumption against culverting unless no other feasible option is available: [Standing Advice – Middle Level](#).
- I. Report bank slips that require remedial works as soon as they occur or are noticed.
- J. Review the water vole myth busting summary attached as an Appendix to the Board Report.

1) Environmental Services Package Update

Further to the update and discussion at the Middle Level IDB Chairs meeting in December 2024, you will have seen and heard us over the previous 12 months, setting out our plans and reasoning for focussing, updating and re-defining the range of services that we provide to IDBs across and beyond the Middle Level. We plan to launch the new Environmental Services Package in 2025/26, as this will help IDBs to begin to significantly improve and evidence their environment compliance and delivery straight away. This also ensures that the Middle Level Commissioners are not under-writing other IDBs environmental responsibilities.

For the Boards where services from the Middle Level Commissioners will be discontinued from 1st April 2026, the new service provision will identify the actions and approaches the Board should progress through the 2025/26 period in order to maintain compliance until a new service provider is in place. The service package will also enable and facilitate a smooth transition. Please use information

in this letter to help scope, define, compare and negotiate the environmental services you'll require from your new supplier(s).

Background

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

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

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

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

Going forward

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

Environmental Services Package

Ref:	Category:	Details:	Days Equivalent:
1.	General Consultancy (inc. retained service)	Up to 2 days general consultancy which can be used for: • Screening and assessment of non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process. • Preliminary habitat and species surveys & reporting* • Ad-hoc advice and guidance. • Initial advice & communications for pollution incidents • INNS identification and advice. • Biodiversity Action Plan BAP ditch survey & reporting**	2

2.	Environmental Compliance Health Checking	- One environmental review with MLC Env. & Ecol. staff per year & subsequent reporting. - Review must include budget setting & expenditure recording for reporting to Defra (IDB1). - Review & assessment of proposed annual programme of works prior to Board approval. - BAP report & review for Board.	1.25
3.	Planning Ecology Services	- Up to 1 day for consent applications advice & guidance^ - Over 1 day will be charged on a time and materials basis. This includes responses to Local Plans and Strategies on the IDBs behalf.	1
4.	Keeping up-to-date	Communication of relevant updates in policy, legislation, regulation and best practice.	1
5.	Training	Attendance for up to 2 candidates at 1 environmental training day per year.	1
Total:			6.25 days p.a.
Cost (2025/26)			£2,375
Notes: *Any surveys or mitigations that follow on from preliminary surveys, including licenced work such as water vole displacement, will be charged on a time and materials basis or can be contracted out if MLC staff are fully booked. ** Any unused consultancy balance can be used to cover the recommended annual 1-day BAP ditch survey, with any shortfall charged separately. If any pre-works surveys (ESRs) are undertaken in the year, they will be extended so that they count as the BAP ditch survey for efficiency. ^ For activity not rechargeable to developers/consent applicants. Unused category balances can be used to cover shortfalls in other categories within the financial year as mutually agreed. Unused balances cannot be carried forward outside the financial year but its use can be discussed with MLC with potential for it to be used to contribute towards assisting the IDB to progress a BAP objective instead if capacity allows. For IDBs who also contract operational services from MLC (via Morgan Lakey, Operations Manager), there will be a 16% reduction in fees, reflective of the efficiency gained from being able to integrate your environmental compliance procedures into our operational processes and communicate freely with your other service providers, taking the annual charge down to £1995 (2025/26).			

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

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

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

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

Benefits of a service provided by MLC

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

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

IDB ecology and the IDB industry is quite niche (e.g. bespoke ecological and environmental licenses and permits). Our ecologists specialise in and represent the local and national IDB industry interests and challenge local and national policy where it is not enabling of our work. We have strength of voice in representing the largest number of IDBs in the country. An example of this is the successful legal challenge made to Natural England last year to clarify and amend the conditions within the IDB-specific badger licence (CL27) to make it more enabling of our routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This was not something that ADA, our national representative was able to progress for us, despite the implications for IDBs nationally. Our ecologists also hold multiple IDB-relevant protected species licences and can carry out licenced activities most commonly required by IDBs for a much-reduced cost compared to an external ecological consultancy.

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

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

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

We hope that this has provided you with sufficient information regarding the new service package from 1st April 2025. I appreciate that the step-change in fee may not be universally well received by Board Members that are less engaged and aware of their personal and collective environmental liabilities and risks.

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

You may choose to benchmark this package against other service providers and opt-out. If so, please feel free to use the information above to secure comparable quotes.

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

2) The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024

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

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

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

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

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

3) Licensing of IDB works around badger setts.

Previously, MLC had planned to roll out training and licence administration services to enable all IDBs to access the CL27 Badger Licence and to conduct their routine and periodic maintenance work compliantly around badger setts. However there were some issues with licence returns in 2023 which highlighted some regional variation in the regulation and enforcement of CL27 licence requirements within Natural England, and some developing impractical licence requirements. MLC and representatives from 3 other IDBs made a successful legal challenge to Natural England regarding the issues and have secured some positive changes to the licence which are more enabling of our low-risk routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This has removed the need for all IDBs to hold their own badger licences (although they may wish to do so anyway) and makes it much easier for MLC to continue to provide qualified and licenced supervision of works where necessary. Any work that carries any risk of damaging a badger sett or disturbing a badger within a sett, even if the risk is deemed to be small, is still licensable and MLC should be contacted for further advice where such works are planned. This includes desilting over or near to a badger sett. Where there is uncertainty, if any works are planned within 30m of a badger sett, please contact MLC for advice and guidance. Please see the updated CL27 licence on-line for full details of activities that are likely to be licensable: [Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes \(CL27\) - GOV.UK](#)

4) Improved advice and guidance provision:

- a) We have developed some extended pre-application advice and guidance for consent applicants to help them understand what environmental considerations they need to make before submitting an application to us. This includes helping them to secure the correct ecological advice and what ecological assessments they need to submit with their application. This will help applicants to avoid delays in us processing their application until such information is received. It has already reduced the number of queries and frequently asked questions that we have had to respond to. It also helps to ensure more efficient delivery of the IDBs statutory responsibilities regarding the environment that are associated with

consenting the work of others in and around IDB channels. Please take a look on the website for more information.

- b) We have welcomed new ecological resource at MLC who will be assisting with delivering the new service package to IDBs. **Abigail Leach** has a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience that she has brought with her, most recently from working at the Broads Authority, and is very well regarded in the industry. Abigail has already revised and updated the **biosecurity policy** and will be launching it later this year at the next IDB training event.

5) **Water Vole Displacement Myth Busting**

A number of recent, licenced IDB water vole displacements have taken place throughout the MLC area, which have enabled some of the DEFRA-funded improvement works to be completed. There appears to be some mis-information circulating amongst some IDBs around the need for and cost of water vole displacements which is causing some concern and confusion. To help all stakeholders to be better informed, we have produced a myth-busting document, attached as an Appendix to the Board report. We will also circulate a pamphlet summarising what activity, presence and timescales landowners and farmers can expect when a water vole displacement is taking place on their land along with the notice of entry for all future displacements to help to set expectations correctly. Please contact us should you have any further questions

Author Name: Sofi Lloyd

Role: Ecology and Environmental Services Manager

Water Voles - Myth Busting

	Claim - <i>Water vole displacements cost a lot of money!</i> Fact - Water vole displacements do add some additional costs to bank works but if MLC services are used, this is much less than some may think. It is most certainly an incalculable amount less than legal, financial and reputational costs if criminal proceedings were progressed in relation to a water vole offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.						
1.	Approx. cost of bank repair per 150m (no water voles): <table border="1"> <tr> <td>£4,680 – 5,140</td><td>£31-34 per metre</td></tr> </table> Additional cost of MLC-progressed water vole displacement per 150m <table border="1"> <tr> <td>£2,110 - £2,260</td><td>£14-15 per metre</td></tr> </table> Cost of using external consultants for displacement per 150m <table border="1"> <tr> <td>£4,810 - £9,810</td><td>£32-65 per metre</td></tr> </table>	£4,680 – 5,140	£31-34 per metre	£2,110 - £2,260	£14-15 per metre	£4,810 - £9,810	£32-65 per metre
£4,680 – 5,140	£31-34 per metre						
£2,110 - £2,260	£14-15 per metre						
£4,810 - £9,810	£32-65 per metre						
2.	Claim – <i>Other IDBs and RMAs and farmers etc. just get on with bank work without surveying for or displacing water voles and they aren't getting into trouble.</i> Fact – Other IDBs and RMAs do displace water voles under licence before bank works as our ecologists have worked with them to do so. Where bank works take place without water vole displacements, it is likely that no water vole have been found in the works area to displace. There are also an increasing number of investigations and prosecutions where water vole offences have been committed in areas of bank works.						
3.	Claim – <i>If you are undertaking flood risk management work, you are exempt from needing to displace water voles as you are keeping land and property safe from flooding.</i> Fact – Protected species legislation is law and no-one is exempt so routine and regular bank works must be undertaken compliantly. Urgent has a different legal meaning to emergency. Urgent works are those that require prompt action to resolve an expected but not imminent threat to public health and safety such as a bank slip. It is not likely that a repairing a bank slip after harvest to avoid damaging crops, that had originally occurred months previously will be seen legally as either an emergency or urgent works because sufficient time would have passed to allow for the works to be planned compliantly with a displacement if necessary. An emergency would be where an unexpected event requires immediate works to prevent or alleviate a significant threat to public health and safety, such as the sudden collapse of a bank and flood water threatening surrounding residential or developed areas. In an emergency it may be necessary to fix the problem first but be confident that you can provide evidence of threat to public health and safety to the Regulator as soon as possible after the works, as is legally required. The emergency declaration must always be made in partnership with a range of professionals including an ecologist.						
4.	Claim – <i>You can't do any bank works or maintenance where there are water voles anymore.</i> Fact – There are safe standard operating procedures that allow routine work such as desilting and flail mowing to be undertaken compliantly where there are water voles which help to avoid or minimise the risk of committing an offence. Any invasive work that breaks ground on the bank toe or bank face should be informed by a water vole survey, undertaken in the right season, well before works begin. For small areas of impact, for example a field drain or headwall installation, of a metre or so wide, it may be possible to reposition the works away from burrows under ecological supervision so a licenced displacement is not required. For longer lengths of bank impacts such as culvert installation or bank reprofile or repair, if a survey showed that water vole were present a displacement under licence would be required.						

5.	Claim - <i>You can get rid of water voles to avoid the need for a displacement if you flail all the banks and marginal vegetation before a survey or dewater a channel.</i> Fact – Dewatering a channel where water voles were known to be present is a licensable activity could be classed as an offence if it were not for specific and very short-term purposes or where a survey had not taken place to determine their presence or absence. Cutting bankside vegetation alone would be unlikely to displace water voles but could be classed as an offence if it damaged burrows or disturbed water voles in their burrows.
6.	Claim – <i>If you fix a bank slip straight away it is unlikely to require a water vole displacement.</i> Fact – A survey would still be needed but it is likely that water vole burrows would have been destroyed or damaged during the slip in many cases and they may have therefore left the damaged areas. If the survey proved this to be the case, then the slip could be repaired as usual without the need for a licenced displacement.
7.	Claim – <i>Water voles are still in our ditches and we have done bank works before without displacing them so it can't bother them that much.</i> Fact – Regardless of this, damaging water vole burrows or disturbing them in their burrows is unlawful and carries a custodial sentence and/or a fine if found guilty. The law is based on huge volumes of scientific evidence which demonstrates that habitat damage and loss is a key factor in the drastic decline in water vole populations. The displacement approaches are shown to conserve and enhance water vole populations.
8.	Claim - <i>You can only repair one 150m length of bank where there are water voles.</i> Fact - The IDB water vole licence states that you can only legally displace from 150m at a time when you are displacing from both banks. You have to leave a 150m bank length for refuge in-between repaired sections. If only one bank is being repaired, theoretically you could displace from an unlimited length but only if an ecologist calculated that the opposite and adjacent habitat was suitable to take an increased number of water vole from the impacted area, which in most cases is unlikely. The usual maximum licensable displacement length for IDBs in all cases is 150m.
9.	Claim – <i>You can only displace water voles during a few specific weeks of the year.</i> Fact – This is true as licenced displacements during these weeks are shown to impact the water vole population the least and it avoids their dormant and breeding seasons. Displacement licence periods are from 15th Feb-15th April or 15th Sept to 31st Oct. You can also only survey for water voles between 15th Feb to 31st Oct as they are dormant during winter.
10.	Claim – <i>It is best not to tell anyone that you have water voles as they can stop you doing the work that you want to do, and don't allow surveys</i> Fact – It is assumed that water voles are everywhere in IDB ditches and drains so a survey would always be required ahead of any invasive works. Demonstrating transparency and competence in supporting biodiversity is likely to be attractive to potential funding partners and sources whereas having a lack of biodiversity data and evidence or being evasive can be conspicuous and can attract scrutiny.
NOTE! Water Vole displacement are only needed where there are water voles! If a survey shows they are not, then bank works can go ahead.	

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	GOVERNANCE
Date:	Wednesday 25th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u> The Board is asked to: A. Review the Board's Policy Statement B. Insurance C. 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. D. 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. E. To note and approve the submission of the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra. F. To review and approve the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2025 and authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement. G. Exercise of Public Rights H. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments			

1. Annual Return & Auditors Report 2023/2024

- 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 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 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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. Insurance

Our insurance has been arranged using Towergate insurance brokers for the year to 31st March 2025. AXA offered a 2-year extension of the tripartite agreement we had previously signed and this was accepted as they offered to keep our business combined policy premium at the same rate for 2025-2026, subject to there not being any changes to the existing cover, i.e. increase in valuations.

Covering MLC and our administered IDBs, the business combined policy premium has increased this year by £16,875, due to the significant increase in pumping station valuations following the meetings

last year. The fleet policy premium has also increased considerably due to the both the number and size of claims during the year, together with there being additional vehicles and plant. We have been warned that AXA capped the increase in the fleet premium, but if this had gone out to tender would probably have been in the region of £110,000 plus 12% Insurance Premium Tax. This equates to an increase of £68,000.

More concerningly, AXA will no longer be offering a specific policy for IDBs going forward so this is likely to have a significant impact on the premium for 2026-2027 as there are only a few insurance companies that will quote for our business. NFU have declined to quote.

4. Risk Assessment

- 4.1 The Board are asked to consider and approve their Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website).

5. Policy Reviews

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

The Board is asked to review their Policy Statement (Appendix 1).

5. IDB1

- 5.1 To note and support the IDB1 return to Defra submitted for the year 2023/24 is included as Appendix 2.

6. Annual Governance Statement:

- 6.1 To review and approve the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement. (Appendix 3)

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 Policy Statement

Appendix 2 IDB1

Appendix 3 Annual Governance Statement

Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board

Administered by:



Governance

Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management

1 Issued

- 1.1 This policy is issued and has been adopted by the Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board.
- 1.2 The policy was last reviewed and republished in June 2025 and will be reviewed at least every five years.

2 Introduction

Purpose

- 2.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board to provide a public statement of the Boards' approach to its management of water levels and flood risk within their District (the District). The Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board are constituted by order of Parliament operating under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and is designated as a flood risk and coastal erosion 'Risk Management Authority' (RMA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- 2.2 The Board serves the local community by managing water levels in ordinary watercourses and other water infrastructures within the District to mitigate against the risks from flooding and drought. In delivering its functions the Board will meet its environmental obligations and commitments and seek opportunities to enhance the environment. The Board recognises their responsibility for good governance, local accountability and financial security, achieving value for money from all its activities. As an independent public body the Board are committed to the pursuit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.3 It should be noted that although this document refers to 'flood and coastal erosion risk management' (FCERM) the District is not affected by coastal erosion.

Background

- 2.4 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has policy responsibility for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England. The Environment Agency is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. Lead Local Flood Authorities (unitary authorities or county councils) are responsible for developing, maintaining and applying a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas. Delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood risk and coastal erosion "Risk Management Authorities" (RMA), which includes the Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board.
- 2.5 This Policy Statement sets out the Board's approach to meeting the national policy aims and objectives in this area, as stated in the *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England*

2020 (the National Strategy); the statement will be revised to reflect future revisions of the National Strategy. It summaries what plans the Board have in place to manage water levels and reduce flood risk, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment, and ensuring good governance and local accountability. Copies of this Policy Statement are available from the Board's office at Middle Level Offices, 85 Whittlesey Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AH. Digital copies can be downloaded from the Middle Level Commissioners website: www.middlelevel.gov.uk.

3. Governance and local accountability

- 3.1 The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures enable effective representation of and accountability to drainage rate payers and the occupiers of non-agricultural land within the district, including elections in line with the requirements of the Land Drainage Act 1991, and timely engagement with charging authorities to fill vacancies in seats allocated to appointed members.
- 3.2 Board members must take decisions objectively in their best interest and uphold the ethical standards expected of public officeholders. Board members must adhere to the Board's Members Code of Conduct, including the seven principles of public life (Nolan Principles). The Board will make sure that there is suitable training in place for board members and staff, including on financial and environmental matters as appropriate.
- 3.3 Board members must declare financial and other interests relevant to their function with the Board. Board members will recuse themselves as appropriate where conflicts of interest may occur in relation to procurement, contract management and decision making.

4. Delivering the National Strategy's policy aim and objectives

Aim

- 4.1 The overall aim of the National Strategy is to ensure the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed by using the full range of options in a co-ordinated way. The Strategy states that communities, individuals, voluntary groups and private and public sector organisations will work together to manage the risk to people and their property, facilitate decision-making and action at the appropriate level, and achieve environmental, social and economic benefits, consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

Objectives

- 4.2 The 2011 Strategy sets out five objectives in pursuance of the overall aim as follows.
 - understand the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, working together to put in place long term sustainable plans to manage these risks and making sure that other plans take account of them;
 - avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood and coastal erosion risk and being careful to manage land elsewhere to avoid increasing risks;
 - build, maintain and improve flood and coastal erosion management infrastructure and systems to reduce the likelihood of harm to people and damage to the economy, environment and society as well as achieving wider environmental benefits;
 - increase public awareness of the risk that remains and engaging with people at risk to encourage them to take action to manage the risks that they face and to make their property more resilient; and
 - improving the detection, forecasting and issue of warnings of flooding, co-ordinating a rapid response to flood emergencies and promoting faster recovery from flooding.
- 4.3 The Board supports the national aim and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels and the Board's policy and approach will be consistent with them.

5. Flood risk and water level management in the Board's District

5.1 The District has been determined to derive benefit, or avoid danger, as a result of drainage operations. As such the whole of the District is at some risk from flooding, but that risk is managed wherever it is practically, environmentally and financially viable¹.

5.2 The Board makes decisions regarding flood risk within the District taking into account the following:

- assets in place considering design standard and life;
- Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority flood risk strategies, plans and maps; and
- other information such as the history of flooding and land use impacts.

5.3 The following outlines the key details of the District:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| • Total area of the drainage district: | 416 ha |
| • Catchment area draining to and including the District: | 520 ha |
| • Area of Agricultural Land: | 230 ha |
| • Area of other (non-agricultural) land: | 186 ha |

5.4 Assets for which the Board have operational responsibility:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| • Water Level Control Structures: | 2 No |
| • Watercourses (maintained): | 9.2 km |
| • Raised embankments: | 0 km |
| • Reservoirs: | 0 ha |
| • Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS): | 0 no |
| • Pumping Stations: | 1 no |

5.5 Assets within or adjacent to the District that are maintained by the Environment Agency:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| • Main Rivers: | 4.8 km |
| • Raised embankments/flood walls: | 3.7 km |
| • Pumping Stations: | 0 no |

¹ It should be noted that the Land Drainage Act 1991 provides the Board with statutory powers to carry out works of maintenance and improvement for land drainage and flood defence purposes, rather than imposing a duty on the Board to carry out such works.

6. Building, maintaining and improving flood and coastal erosion risk management systems

- 6.1 Through the operation, maintenance and improvement of watercourses and other water control assets within the District, the Board seeks to achieve a general standard of water level management that enables navigation, the drainage and irrigation of agricultural land, reduces flood risk to developed areas, and sustains environmental features throughout the District.
- 6.2 The Board monitors and reviews the condition of its watercourses and other assets, particularly those designated as critical, over-spilling from which could affect people and property. Consistent with the resultant needs established, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the assets is commensurate with the standards required. The programme is reviewed periodically by the Board to ensure it is delivering the appropriate condition.
- 6.3 Where standards are not at the desired level, improvement works will be sought where they are considered to be practical and financially viable by the Board. Where improvement works meet the criteria set by Defra, financial support will be sought from the Government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding. Where appropriate works will be undertaken in partnership with other Risk Management Authorities and take opportunities to work with natural processes.
- 6.4 Work for and by the Board will be carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money taking due regard of local flood risk management requirements and strategies, opportunities for partnership working, environmental obligations and guidance available from Defra, the Environment Agency and other organisations.
- 6.5 The Board's powers to carry out water level and flood risk management works are permissive (i.e. the Board are not obliged to carry out works) and their resources are limited. The Board's policy is therefore to designate what they consider to be the most important watercourses in the District as "District Drains" and prioritise their resources to the appropriate maintenance and, where necessary, improvement of such channels and associated structures. The watercourses and structures so designated will change over time as necessary but the current designated watercourses and structures are shown on the plan attached to this Statement.
- 6.6 Other watercourses usually are the responsibility of other bodies or the adjoining owners. The Board will only take action in respect of these latter watercourses where resources are available and where it is in all the circumstances appropriate for the Board to become involved, bearing in mind the powers available to other persons or bodies.
- 6.7 The Board have a supervisory duty, under section 1(2)(d) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 over all matters relating to the drainage of land in their District and will, under this duty where appropriate advise others regarding the undertaking of works when it is not appropriate for the Board to exercise its own powers.
- 6.8 The Board will also seek to ensure, where possible that assets managed by other risk Management Authorities, which also reduce flood risk to the District, are maintained at a satisfactory standard and may enter into a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement with another Risk Management Authority to achieve better value for money when carrying out work to reduce flood risk.

7. Regulation of activities – avoiding inappropriate development and land management

- 7.1 The Board will take appropriate steps to help riparian owners understand their responsibilities for maintenance, byelaw compliance and environmental regulations.
- 7.2 The Board will regulate as necessary, using available legislative powers and byelaws, the activity of others to ensure their actions within, alongside, and otherwise impacting its drainage system do not

increase flood risk, prevent the efficient working of drainage systems, or adversely impact the environment.

- 7.3 The potential impact on flood risk from future development both within the District and the wider catchment draining into the District, is fully recognised by the Board. The Board will take an active role in the assessment of local plans, major development and, individual (planning) applications, to prevent inappropriate development and land use to ensure that flood risk is not increased. This will include, where appropriate, providing pre-application advice and checking of flood risk assessments.
- 7.4 Where appropriate the Board will seek contributions from developers to cover the cost of consultations and advice and for both immediate and longer term works necessary to mitigate against any resultant increase in flood risk. Such contributions will be recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated technical guidance.
- 7.5 The Board will where appropriate designate structures or features affecting flood risk using Section 30 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

8. Communication and transparency

- 8.1 The Board will publicise the local risks from flooding, the reasons for managing water levels within the District and articulate the efforts being undertaken by the Board to manage water levels and flood risk as well as the steps the local community and land managers can take to assist in its management.
- 8.2 The Board will be open and transparent in its actions and decisions. The Board will comply with the requirements set out in the relevant Local Government transparency code.
- 8.3 The Board will provide an overview of the objectives and costs of its water level management operations by publishing on its website:-
- A record of the watercourses it periodically maintains;
 - A statement of the types of general maintenance activities it routinely undertakes and why;
 - Its Annual Report to Defra (IDB1 Form); and
 - Approved Board minutes and papers.
- 8.4 The Board will seek views and respond to enquiries from the local general public in this regard and work with local partners to build a culture within which watercourses are seen as vital to managing flood risk, and enhancing habitat and amenity. Every effort will be made to dissuade abuse of watercourses.
- 8.5 The Board invite any comments regarding the condition of its system, which could assist with the management of water levels.

9. Working together

- 9.1 The Board will co-operate and share information with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion flood risk management function. The Board will contribute to strategies, plans and consultations relevant to its catchment and functions.
- 9.2 The Board will assist the Environment Agency wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, and assist Risk Management Authorities where necessary during flood emergencies. The Board will participate as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.

- 9.3 The Board have provided the Environment Agency and other local Risk Management Authorities with information on the major flood defence assets for which they are responsible. The information is available from the Environment Agency.
- 9.4 The Board will seek to work with all relevant local organisations, in carrying out its flood and coastal erosion risk management functions and environmental obligations.

10. Environmental Measures

- 10.1 The Board have nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 and Amendments 2011, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, the Environment Act 2021, and as a competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.
- 10.1.1 Further to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021, the Board will review their Water Level Management Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans with reference to the local nature recovery strategy and relevant species conservation or protected site strategy for their areas.
- 10.2 Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work constitutes vegetation control and desilting and is often a vital and routine requirement. Whilst inevitably some short-term impacts will arise, this management is often essential to maintain the distinct assemblage of aquatic habitat and species present in the District. Such work will be carried out in a way that manages the potential risks to the environment. The Board have access to environmental expertise from their Ecology and Environmental Services Manager and have a Biodiversity Action Plan, developed according to ADA and Natural England guidelines, which indicate the way in which their functions can be carried out in a way appropriate to the environment and how the environment can be enhanced. The Board maintain only a small proportion of the total watercourse length in the District, the significant majority being the responsibility of the adjoining land owners or of other bodies.
- 10.3 When carrying out work, be it maintenance or improvement, and consistent with the need to maintain satisfactory flood protection standards, the Board will aim to:-
- Avoid any unnecessary or long term damage to agricultural interests and to natural habitats and species;
 - Carry out the monitoring of any gains and losses of biodiversity and report annually to the Environment Agency; and
 - Take appropriate opportunities to achieve multiple environmental outcomes and work with natural processes, wherever possible, including the enhancement of habitats and water bodies within the District.
- 10.4 The District encompasses no sites of national and international biological or geological interest.
- 10.5 The Board has no Water Level Management Plan.
- 10.6 The Board will play its full role in sustaining the Water Level Management Plans prepared for SSSIs to maintain, or bring sites into, favourable condition, in conjunction with Natural England and other interested parties and review the plans in accordance with guidance.

Internal drainage boards in England



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Annual Report for the year ended

31 March 2024

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 28 February 2025 a copy must be provided to:

- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs via flood.reports@defra.gov.uk
- Asset Management and Engineering, Environment Agency via idbfund@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, and please answer **ALL QUESTIONS**.

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Section A – Financial information

Preliminary information on special levies issued by the Board for 2024-25

Special levies information for financial year 2024-25	
Name of local authority	£
1. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	15,741
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	15,741

Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2024

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 2023*¹

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2024 £
INCOME		
A. Drainage Rates		7,092
B. Special Levies		13,889
C. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		1,669
D. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		
E. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		
F. PSCAs overall total		
Breakdown:		
from EA		
from other RMAs		
G. Loans		
H. Rechargeable Works		
I. Interest and Investment Income		740
J. Rents and Acknowledgements		
K. Other Income		4,950
Write back of provisions		
Total Income		28,340
EXPENDITURE		
L. New Works and Improvement Works		
M. Total precept to the Environment Agency		1,992
N. Watercourse maintenance		5,988
O. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		2,243
P. Administration		7,242
Q. PSCAs		

¹ https://saas.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PractitionersGuide_2023.pdf

R. Rechargeable Works		
S. Finance Charges		
T. Biodiversity enhancement and conservation – overall total		371
Breakdown:		
General, across the whole region	371	
SSSI specific, where relevant		
U. Other Expenditure		426
Insurance		
Electricity costs – overall total		19,778
Breakdown (if possible):		
Standing charge (per annum)	405	
Unit charge (per annum)	19,373	
Fuel (petrol and diesel costs) – overall total		
Breakdown:		
Pumping stations		
Fleet and plant machinery		
Total expenditure		38,040
EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
V. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		(9,700)
W. Developers Funds income not applied in year		306
X. Grant income not applied in year		

Value of drainage rates outstanding at year end?

0 %
£ 0

Value of special levies outstanding at year end?

0 %
£ 0

Notes:

- K. Include all other Income, such as absorption account surpluses (for example plant and labour absorption accounts). Please include sub-total of all other income in the first row and then a breakdown in separate rows below.
- L. 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.

- M. 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.
- N. 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. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.
- O. 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. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.
- P. 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. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.
- Q. State all costs associated with the PSCA.
- R. 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.
- S. Include the cost of servicing any borrowing, in terms of bank/loan/hire purchase interest payable.
- T. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – that are likely intended to help enhance and/or conserve biodiversity. These costs are likely to be incurred in implementing actions set out in an IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan or other conservation actions. If possible, you should identify the overall costs and break them down into two groups: general across the whole IDB area, and SSSI specific areas (in implementing actions set out in SSSI Water Level Management Plans or SSSI River Restoration Plans). Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.
- U. 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). Please include sub-total of all other expenditure in the first row and then a breakdown in separate rows below.
- V. 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.
- W. Total balance of developer fund year end.
- X. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B – IDB Reporting

Please answer **ALL QUESTIONS**. We will assume a negative response for any that are not answered.

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.

1. Is an up to date statement in place and copy (or weblink) provided to Defra, and EA? Yes ☒ No ☐
2. What year was your statement last updated? 2019

Biodiversity

3. Please indicate whether your Board has a Biodiversity Action Plan Yes ☒ No ☐
4. If "yes" is the Biodiversity Action Plan available on your website? Yes ☒ No ☐
5. What year was your Biodiversity Action Plan last updated? 2022
6. Have you reported progress on BAP implementation on your website? Yes ☐ No ☒
7. When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)? 12/01/2024
8. Do you have a biosecurity process? Yes ☒ No ☐

SSSI water level management plans

9. Are you responsible for any SSSI water level management plans? Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please complete the following table:

Name	Partners	Date of last review	Date of last update

10. Do you contribute towards any SSSI water level management plans? Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please complete the following table:

Name	Partners	Date of last review	Date of last update

11. Area of SSSI with IDB responsible for water level management plan/s.....	0 hectares
12. Area of SSSI with IDB contribution towards water level management plan/s.....	0 hectares
13. Area of SSSI where IDB water level management activities are contributing to recovering or favourable condition?.....	0 hectares
14. Area of SSSI where IDB water level management actions are needed to achieve recovering or favourable condition?.....	0 hectares

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:

- 15. Appropriately skilled Board Members (e.g. Board member from an Environmental Body/Authority) ☐
- 16. Co-opted members ☐
- 17. Directly employed staff ☐
- 18. Contracted persons or consultants ☒
- 19. Environmental Partners/NGOs ☐
- 20. Other ☐

If so, please list:

Public sector cooperation agreements (PSCAs)

21. How many active PSCAs are you working on?

22. Which risk management authorities are you working with on a PSCA?

Environment Agency	
Lead local flood authority	
Local authority (not a lead local flood authority)	
Internal drainage board	
Water company	
Other	

If other, please list:

23. Please indicate the type of work being undertaken.

Routine maintenance
Asset operation and monitoring
Asset repairs
Support during flood incident
Support during flood recovery
Other

If other, please list:

Asset Management

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

24. ADIS ☐
25. Paper Records ☐
26. Other Electronic System ☒

If so, please list:

Excel

27. Has your Board continued to undertake visual inspections and update asset databases on an annual basis?.....Yes ☒ No ☐

28. What is the cumulative total of identified watercourse that the Board periodically maintains?

9.2 kilometres

29. How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

1 pumping station

30. How many pumps does the Board operate?

electric
diesel
renewable energy pumps (e.g. directly powered by wind, solar, hydro, etc)
temporary / mobile pumps
other type of pumps

1

31. If other, please list:

--

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

0.5 cm3/sec

Health and Safety

33. Does the Board have a current Health and Safety policy in place? Yes ☒ No ☐

34. Does the Board have a Board Member focused on ensuring that Health and Safety is considered when board decisions are made? Yes ☒ No ☐

35. Does the Board have a responsible officer for Health and Safety? Yes ☒ No ☐

36. Have there been any reportable incidents in the past year? Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please summarise in the box below:

--

Guidance and Best Practice

37. Has your IDB adopted a formal Scheme of Delegation? Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your IDB provided, or accessed via a third party, training for board members in the last year in any of the following areas?

38. Governance ☒

39. Finance ☒

40. Environment ☒

41. Health, safety and welfare ☐

42. Communications and engagement ☐

43. Other ☐

If so, please specify:

44. Is your Board's website information current for this financial year? (Board membership, audited accounts, programmes of works, WLMPs, etc)..... Yes ☒ No ☐

45. Has your IDB adopted computerised accounting and rating systems?..... Yes ☒ No ☐

46. Has your board published all minutes of meetings on the website?.....Yes ☒ No ☐

47. 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 ☐

48. 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:

49. Standing Orders Yes ☒ No ☐

50. Have the Standing Orders been approved by Ministers Yes ☒ No ☐

51. Byelaws Yes ☒ No ☐

If you have Byelaws, have:

52. you adopted the 2021 model byelaws.....Yes ☒ No ☐

53. Or have you adopted the 2012 model byelaws.....Yes ☐ No ☒

54. the byelaws been approved by Ministers.....Yes ☒ No ☐

55. Code of Conduct for Board Members..... Yes ☒ No ☐

56. Financial Regulations.....Yes ☒ No ☐

57. Register of Member's Interests.....Yes ☒ No ☐

58. Anti-fraud and corruption policy.....Yes ☒ No ☐

Board membership and attendance

59. How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?

7
7
6
1

60. Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

61. Number of elected members on the board at year end.

62. Number of appointed members on the board at year end.

63. Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	4
64. Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	1

65. Have you held elections (with or without a vote) within the last three years?.....Yes ☒ No ☐

66. If you have held elections, did they 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 ☐

Complaints procedure

67. 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 ☐

68. Number of complaints received in the financial year?	0
69. Number of complaints outstanding in the financial year?	0
70. Number of complaints referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman?	0
71. Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government & Social Care 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):

Published:

72. your completed IDB1 Form ☒
73. press release/s ☐
74. newsletter/s ☐
75. notice/s ☒
76. public consultation ☐
77. updated your IDB website ☒

Media engagement with:

78. national and/or local media e.g. TV, radio, etc ☐
79. national and/or local media e.g. newspaper, magazine, etc ☐
80. trade media ☐
81. social media ☐

Public meetings:

82. Held public meeting/s ☒
83. Attended meetings e.g. Parish Council, local interest group, local flood group, etc ☐

Public events:

84. attended show/event/s e.g. county shows, fairs, etc ☐
85. attended trade event e.g. Flood and Coast, Flood and Water Live, etc ☐
86. hosted IDB open day ☐

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

Has your Board published all minutes of meetings on the website? 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

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

Signature

Date

Name in BLOCK LETTERS

Designation

Email address


14/02/2025
MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT
ASSISTANT TREASURER
sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

BLUNTISHAM 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 2025, 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 the authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable, in our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

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

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

and recorded as minute reference:

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

Chair

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT
Date:	Wednesday 25th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett
RECOMMENDATIONS The Board is asked to: A. Consider the Budgeting paper Appendix 1 B. Consider and approve the payments detailed within Appendix 2. C. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2023/2024 within Appendix 3. D. To authorise the Chairman to sign the Annual Return for 2023/2024 (Appendix 4)			

Finance Officer's review and key messages
For 2024/2025 the Board set a rate of 17.00p to raise a total of £23,778 in agricultural drainage rates and special levies against estimated expenditure of £23,498. Included in the 17.00p was 0.20p as a provision for future pumping plant replacement.
At the Board meeting 17 th January 2025, a 'probable actual' position had been drafted, based around actual expenditure recorded to the end of November 2024 and estimates/forecasts to the 31 st March 2025. The final out-turn for the year being £36,028 giving a reduction in the general fund balance of £15,047.13 to £9,335.49 at 31 st March 2024. The Board have £42,137.87 in their plant replacement fund and £305.54 in the development charges account at this date.
These balances are shown in the attached accounts, finance papers and Annual return which the Board are required to consider 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 2024/2025

- 2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 2

3. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2024/2025:

- 3.1 Annual Return 2024/2025:

To consider the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2025 and the completion of Section 2 of the Annual Return as required in the Audit Regulations. Appendix 3

Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

Role: Responsible Finance Officer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Budget Review

Appendix 2 Payments for 2024/2025

Appendix 3 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/2025

Appendix 4 Annual Return 2024/2025

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
ACCOUNTS/ESTIMATES MONITORING 2024/2025

	<u>Approved budget</u> <u>2024/2025</u> £	<u>Probable Actual</u> <u>2024/2025</u> £	<u>Actual</u> <u>2024/2025</u> £	<u>Remarks</u>
1 Channel Maintenance	6,100	6,300	6,410	
2 Pumping Station				
Repairs and Renewals	1,700	1,400	491	
Electricity	5,750	10,000	14,170	
Labour	1,600	1,600	1,600	
3 Administration				
Insurances	500	770	770	
Administration	7,825	7,750	7,902	
4 EA Precept	2,052	2,052	2,052	
5 Improvement works	0	0	0	
	25,527	29,872	33,394.65	
LESS Deposit Accounts interest, etc	2,029	2,601	15,294	
	23,498	27,272	18,101	

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDPayments 2024/2025 (1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025)

Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety Re-charge 2023-2024 (Account from COPE Safety Management)	204.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	143.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and Travelling	3,832.88
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	195.36
Water Resources East - Contribution to operating costs 2024-2025	180.00
Environment Agency - Precept	1,026.13
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of electrical installation condition report (Account from CMS Electrical)	120.00
D & M K Green & Sons - Pumping station duties (1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024)	1,920.00
Bank charges	30.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2023-2024 accounts)	618.00
PKF Littlejohns LLP - Audit fee (2023/2024 accounts)	252.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	28.80
Environment Agency - Precept	1,026.12
Bank charges	3.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges	3,353.75
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	651.24
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	14.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Insurance premium for increased pumping station valuation	118.88
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	203.76
Association of Drainage Authorities (River Great Ouse branch) - Subscription 2024/2025	813.60
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Environmental Officer)	584.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution towards retirement gift	25.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	286.80
	<u>15,631.62</u>

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025
GENERAL FUND

2025			2024		
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year:-		Apr-01	Balance brought forward	9,335.49
	Precept	2,052.25	2025	Rate income & Special levy	23,778.43
	Insurances	770.12	Mar-31	Irrecoverables	<u>0.00</u>
	Administration	7,901.93			23,778.43
	Drainworks	6,409.75		Interest on deposit accounts	242.61
	Pumping Station Repairs	490.60		Highland Water Contributions	2,488.10
	Electricity	14,170.00		Storm Recovery Grant	10,613.08
	Contractors Charges	<u>1,600.00</u>		Write back of provisions	1,950.00
		31,342.40			
	Balance carried forward	15,013.06			
		<u>48,407.71</u>			<u>48,407.71</u>

BALANCE SHEET

Capital Section

Liabilities

Capital Provisions 470,000.00

Assets

Barley Croft Pumping Station 470,000.00

Revenue Section

General Fund 15,013.06
Sundry Creditors 61,325.00
Pumping Plant Replacement Fund 43,232.92
Development Charges Account 313.48

Value added Tax - Refunds due 2,218.74
Ratepayers Account - Arrears 0.00
Sundry Debtors 538.50
Balance in hand -
Barclays - Treasurer's account 20,853.38
Barclays - Business premium 96,273.84

589,884.46

589,884.46

Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2025

Treasurers Account 2023/2024

1st April 2024			31st March 2025	
Balance brought forward	92,551.64		Payments made during the year	15,631.62
31st March 2025				
Receipts during the year				
Clerk's collection account	38,861.60			
Interest on deposit accounts	<u>1,345.60</u>	40,207.20	Balance carried forward	117,127.22
		<u><u>132,758.84</u></u>		<u><u>132,758.84</u></u>

Barclays Bank PLC

Current Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2025	20,853.38
Less unrepresented cheques	0.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	<u><u>20,853.38</u></u>

Cash balances as at 31st March 2025

Barclays Bank PLC

Current Account	20,853.38
Business Premium Account	96,273.84
<u>Total reconciled cash balances per accounts</u>	<u><u>117,127.22</u></u>

Bluntisham IDB
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return
Financial year ended 31st March 2025

**Per Annual
Return**

Line 1	Balances brought forward General Fund Pump replacement fund Development Charges Fund	9,335.49 42,137.87 305.54 51,778.90	51,779
Line 2	Rates and Special Levies Agricultural rates Special Levies Penalty Costs Write-off	8,037.43 15,741.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 23,778.43	23,778
Line 3	Total other receipts Interest General fund Pump replacement fund Development Charges Fund Highland Water Write Back of Provisions Storm Recovery Grant	242.61 1,095.05 7.94 2,488.10 1,950.00 10,613.08 16,396.78	16,397
Line 4	Staff costs Wages/salaries National insurance contributions Pension costs Travelling expenses	0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00	0
Line 5	Loan repayments PWLB - Principal PWLB - Interest	0.00 0.00 0.00	0
Line 6	All other payments Precept Rates, insurances, telephones Repairs and renewals Fuel Drainworks Contractors charges Administration Underprovision in previous years	2,052.25 770.12 490.60 14,170.00 6,409.75 1,600.00 7,901.93 0.00 33,394.65	33,395
Line 7	Balances carried forward General Fund Pump replacement Fund Development Charges Fund	15,013.06 43,232.92 313.48 58,559.46	58,559
Reconciliation Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6		58,559.46	
Balances carried forward Per Annual return		58,559.00	

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

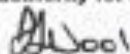
BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance:
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	61,479	51,779	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	20,981	23,778	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	7,359	16,397	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	0	0	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	38,040	33,395	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	51,779	58,559	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	92,552	117,127	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	470,000	470,000	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PwLB).

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

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 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

12/06/2025

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

as recorded in minute reference:

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