# NEEDHAM AND LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Needham and Laddus IDB
Held at the Crown Lodge, Outwell on Tuesday 15th April 2025.

PRESENT

| | |
|---|---|
| J Martin (Chair) | C Robinson |
| J Fenn (Vice-Chair) | C Rose (KLWN) |
| S Calton | J Scott |
| C Crofts (KLWN) | M Scott |
| K Harrison (KLWN) | P West |
| P Lankfer | |

Mrs Ruth Martin representing the Clerk and Mr Morgan Lakey representing the consulting engineer were in attendance.

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mrs Ruth Martin to the Board.

Apologies for absence were received from Dale Boyce, Michael Fenn and Alan Giles.

B.423 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.

Jonathan Fenn declared an interest as an employee of Middle Level Commissioners.

Mr Rose and Mr Crofts declared interests (as councillors of The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk) in matters relating to planning applications.

B.424 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 16th April 2024 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.425 Constitution & Membership
Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **4** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS IDB** | **Subject:** | **CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Polly Tombleson** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

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

## 1. Current status

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

| | Elected Members | Appointed Members | Total Members | Quorum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Composition | 12 | N/A | | 5 |
| Actual | **12** | 1 FDC, 5 KLWN | 19 | |
| Vacancies | **0** | | **0** | |

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

| No | Name | Status (one of four categories) | Commentary |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tom Brown | Ratepayer | |
| 2 | Steve Calton | Nominee of Ratepayer (Martin & Sons) | |
| 3 | Jon Fenn | Nominee of Ratepayer (Martin & Sons) | Vice-Chair |
| 4 | Michael Fenn | Nominee of Ratepayer (Martin & Sons) | District Officer |
| 5 | Alan Giles | Ratepayer | |
| 6 | Peter Lankfer | Ratepayer | |
| 7 | Andrew Lenson | Representative of Coldham farms | |
| 8 | James Martin | Ratepayer | Chair |
| 9 | Chris Robinson | Ratepayer | |
| 10 | John Scott | Nominee of Ratepayer (A G Scott & Son) | |
| 11 | Michael Scott | Nominee of Ratepayer (A G Scott & Son) | |
| 12 | Paul West | Nominee of Ratepayer (Laddus Farms) | |
| 13 | Dale Boyce | Non-voting member | Non-voting member |

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

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

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

| No | Name | Appointing Council | Commentary (one of three categories) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brian Carr | BCKLWN | Councillor |
| 2 | Christopher Crofts | BCKLWN | Councillor |
| 3 | Julian Kirk | BCKLWN | Councillor |
| 4 | Colin Rose | BCKLWN | Councillor |
| 5 | Charlie Marks | FDC | Councillor |
| 6 | Keith Harrison | BCKLWN | |

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

## 2. Attendance

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

Elected Members

| No | Name | 16/04/2024 | 18/10/2023 | 18/4/2023 | 19/4/2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tom Brown | | | | |
| 2 | Steve Calton | Apologies | Present | Present | Present |
| 3 | Jon Fenn | Present | Present | Present | Present |
| 4 | Michael Fenn | Apologies | Present | Present | Present |
| 5 | Alan Giles | Present | | Present | Present |
| 6 | Peter Lankfer | Present | N/A | Present | |
| 7 | Andrew Lenson | Apologies | apologies | N/A | N/A |
| 8 | James Martin | Present | Apologies | Present | Present |
| 9 | Chris Robinson | Present | Apologies | | |
| 10 | John Scott | Present | Apologies | | Present |
| 11 | Michael Scott | Present | Apologies | Apologies | Present |
| 12 | Paul West | Present | | Present | Present |
| 13 | Dale Boyce | Present | Present | Present | |

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

| No | Name | 6/12/2024 | 6/10/2023 | 13/12/2022 | 12/4/2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | James Martin | Present | Apologies | Present | Present |

Appointed Members (current and previous)

| No | Name (Council) | 16/04/2024 | 18/10/2023 | 18/4/2023 | 19/4/2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Keith Harrison | Present | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2 | Brian Carr (BCKLWN) | Present | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 3 | Christopher Crofts (BCKLWN) | Apologies | Apologies | Apologies | Present |
| 4 | Julian Kirk (BCKLWN | Apologies | Apologies | Apologies | Present |
| 5 | Colin Rose (BCKLWN | Apologies | Present | Apologies | Apologies |
| 6 | Charlie Marks (FDC) | | Apologies | | |

## 3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 The Election of members of the Board will take place this year. Members will receive an election notice during July/August and are requested to return their complete slip as soon as possible. This term for current members ends on 31st October 2025.

**4. Training**

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

4.2 To date 1 of 13 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 10 of 13 Board Members have reported viewing 2 of 5 videos

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

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

**Author Name: Polly Tombleson**
**Role: Senior Business Support Officer**

Election

Mrs Martin reported that the term of office of the Members of the Board will expire on 31st October 2025. Mrs Martin advised Board members that they will receive an election notice during July or August and reminded them to ensure that this is returned as soon as possible and before 31st October 2025.

Attendance

The attendance of Board members was reviewed, and the Chairman agreed to make contact with Mr Tom Brown to ascertain if it was his intention to remain a Board member as he had not attended the previous four meetings.

Vacancies and Appointments

The resignation of Mr Andrew Lensen has been received by the Chairman, thus creating a vacancy on the Board. The Chairman advised the Board that Mr Joshua Martin had indicated his willingness to join the Board, and Mr Crofts, seconded by Mr Rose, proposed that Mr Joshua Martin be appointed.

Training

Board members were asked to complete the training matrix as circulated at the meeting, and to advise the office if any further training is undertaken.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman contact Mr Tom Brown regarding his position on the Board.

That Mr Joshua Martin be appointed to the Board.

B.426 Clerk's Report
Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **5** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD** | **Subject:** | **CLERK'S REPORT** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Paul Burrows** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

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

## 1. MLC Services to IDBs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The shorter-term measures to mitigate this are:

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

The medium-term measures to mitigate this are:

- IDB reform/amalgamation across the Middle Level, including a review of the business model between the MLC and IDBs.
- Increasing and diversifying income, including a review of our charges associated with planning and consenting.

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

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

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

**2. Electricity**

2.1 **Electricity Service**

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

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

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

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

**3. Charging for Planning & Consenting**

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

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

The Board is asked to support the need to review our charging model to maximise income. The new model will be implemented from the 1st April 2025. This will be reviewed annually, and the Clerk invites feedback.

**4. Rating**

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

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

Upgrading to DRS 365 (the software licence, training and transitioning work) will cost circa £10k per site (ie covering MLC and our administered IDBs) and the annual support charge will be circa £5k per site. This covers their costs and provides a more robust, sustainable and better supported system than we currently have, reducing risk to MLC and our administered IDBs. These costs will be reviewed next on 1 April 2025 and annually thereafter. The existing DRS2005 maintenance fee is £1k per annum.
The only other options we have would be to create our own software (which is impractical) or revert to a paper-based system (which would be a retrograde and resource intensive step). In these circumstances the WMA would offer a year extension to the DRS2005, hosted on their server, but at our risk should Microsoft decide to turn off the Access 2003 platform upon which the existing DRS is dependent.

**5. Debt Management**

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

6. **Highland Water & IDB Precept.**

A formal appeal to the Minister under Section 57 (4) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 was thankfully narrowly avoided in 2024/25 given that the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) agreed a one-off approach to covering the shortfall in the Environment Agency's budget to ensure highland water claims (HWC) to local IDBs were met.

In addition, the Environment Agency's HWC budget for 2025/26 was increased from that which was indicatively allocated. Had the indicative allocation stood, the forecast budget shortfall would have essentially resulted in the Environment Agency imposing an active withdrawal of management of a number of districts and the Middle Level catchment without any underpinning consultation with those affected, impact assessment, any clear policy position or procedure.

However, without a programme of reform and mitigations, we will potentially be in an appeal situation at some not too distant point in the future. The time that would have been spent drafting and lodging an appeal has been used more constructively to develop 'The Highland Water Conundrum' document. This has been submitted to the Minister, Defra, the Environment Agency and our Local Authorities.

There are a range of measures that are outside of the control or influence of ourselves and IDBs that would make a positive difference. I have identified these as recommendations within the document. Many of these recommendations are for the Environment Agency to consider and implement as appropriate. I would be happy to discuss further and contribute directly to any reviews that take account of this matter.

We feel that it is unfair that HWC payments are under threat without mitigations being available that provide us and IDBs with a greater degree of control, influence and/or choice. We and IDBs have no choice but to receive and manage water that flows into our/their districts from highland areas. We/they are providing a public service to beneficiaries within (and of) highland areas and we/they have no choice to not provide this service.

The 'Highland Water Conundrum' document is available to Middle Level Board Members and Commissioners upon request.

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

**7. Insurance**

Our insurance has been arranged using Towergate insurance brokers for the year to 31*st* 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.

**Author Name: Paul Burrows**
**Role: Clerk**

Mrs Martin advised that the Clerk's Report would be taken as read, asking for further consideration to be made of the following points.

Planning and Consenting Charging Model

The new planning and consenting charging model has been implemented and been in use since 1st April. Mrs Martin reported that it is planned to review the fees every year, and that the Clerk invites feedback. The Board expressed their satisfaction with the model.

Highland Water and IDB Precept

Although this Board does not have a highland and therefore no highland water claims, Mrs Martin outlined the issues being faced by other Boards. After being advised that claims would not be paid in full, a formal appeal was narrowly avoided after the shortfall was met by the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC). Following this the Clerk has written 'The Highland Water Conundrum' document which has been submitted to the Minister, Defra, the EA and our local authorities, and also circulated to all Board members.

Mrs Martin advised that the IDB Precept had increased by 2% this year, and that the Clerk was considering whether an appeal should be lodged, and if this would have greater gravitas if this were on behalf of all the Boards that he administers. The Board agreed to delegate this decision to the Clerk acting with the Chair.

Resolution

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

MLC Services to IDBs

Mr West asked if there was any indication that MLC may withdraw their clerking and technical services provision for this Board, and if there was any need for this IDB to amalgamate with other boards that have pumped systems. Mrs Martin drew his attention to the final item on the agenda, Middle Level IDB Change, and the associated report, to be discussed later in the meeting. Mr Fenn advised that he thought that both may be possible but in the future, and not at this time. Mr West voiced his concern that amalgamation with a pumped Board would have a significant impact on the rating, although Mrs Martin and Mr Fenn both advised that other Boards in a similar situation have differential rating which means that the pumped areas are rated differently to the gravity areas.

Mr Fenn went on to add that this board has strong membership and has amalgamated with Laddus in the past without issue. Therefore, he doesn't see the need to amalgamate in the next 5 years unless it is forced upon them. Mr Calton thought that local amalgamation would be a defensive measure, and the Chair asked if forced amalgamation could be held off. Mr Fenn thought that if the Board were diligent and open minded and showing good service to ratepayers then it would be possible, but if they were to struggle with membership then it would be more difficult. As the district is not pumped then it could be less of an issue compared to a pumped District Board. Mr J Scott thought that the Board may need to pump in future due to changes in the land, and the Chair concluded the discussion, summarising that the general consensus within the Board is that they would like to stay independent, noting that Churchfield and Plawfield IDB are the only other non-pumped Board in the area.

Fens Reservoir
Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **Under Clerks report** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD** | **Subject:** | **FENS RESERVOIR** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Paul Burrows** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

A. Approve 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.

B. Acknowledge 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.

## 1. Latest position

1.1 On behalf of the Middle Level Commissioners and IDBs, we responded to the phase two public consultation and having worked closely with Anglian Water over the last 24-months, what is now clear within the proposals is that in terms of water source, water transfer, site flood resilience, emergency drawdown and downstream water transfer routes, the planning, construction and operation of the reservoir will be dependent upon the Middle Level Commissioners' and IDB infrastructure, our operations and our resources. These need to be ready and resilient for this enhanced future role.

1.2 Whilst the Middle Level has always been key within UK food security, the Fens Reservoir (see website) is a game-changer as our collective infrastructure and operations will also become critical for regional housing and economic growth beyond our catchment. This is arguably the boldest and most transformational investment in the Fens since the original great drainage schemes of the 1600s. It presents a great opportunity to bring resilience and investment into the Middle Level as we face the accelerated challenges of a changing climate as evidenced within the recent Future Fens Integrated Adaptation Programme's Climate Change Risk Assessment.

1.3 We will be prioritising input into the Fens Reservoir as the potential gains are significant and the stakes are high. Therefore, please be mindful that other service standards may be affected.

1.4 We have been recovering our staff time costs associated with many aspects of supporting Anglian Water develop the Fens Reservoir proposals through a Service level Agreement (SLA). The SLA is being updated to cover additional technical support we need to bring in, e.g. consultants. We are also finalising a separate agreement for reservoir project funded additional staff capacity.

1.5 By spring 2025 Anglian Water aim to have a whole scheme solution identified ahead of another design freeze and third non statutory public consultation.

## 2. IDB Interests

2.1 The table below outlines the IDBs that we administer that are directly impacted in one way or another by the proposals so far. However, with the Middle Level being the proposed primary source of water, this means indirectly all the other IDBs that gravity outfall or pump into the Middle Level Commissioners watercourses also have an interest.

| Organisation | Direct Interest areas | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Middle Level Commissioners | Interaction with and impact on MLC infrastructure and operations:<br>• Water sources<br>• Emergency drawdown<br>• Site design | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Downstream transfer<br><br>Governance impacts of reservoir | |
| Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Site design (main site)<br>• Downstream transfer<br><br>Governance impacts of reservoir | |
| *Commissioners for imbanking fen lands and low grounds within the Parishes of Chatteris, Doddington and Wimblington, also known as the 'Imbanking Commissioners'* | *Governance opportunities the reservoir may enable dissolve the Commissioners and redistribute assets* | |
| Nightlayers IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Site design (treatment works)<br>• Downstream transfer<br><br>Governance impacts of reservoir | |
| Sutton & Mepal IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Downstream transfer | |
| Warboys Somersham & Pixley IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Downstream transfer | |
| Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Downstream transfer | |
| Upwell IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Downstream transfer | |
| Bluntisham IDB | Interaction with and impact on IDB infrastructure and operations:<br>• Downstream transfer | *From 1st April 2026 we are discontinuing MLC services to these IDBs. With them and their new service provider we'll need to consider what this means for the Fens Reservoir.* |
| Hundred Foot Washes IDB | Ouse Washes as a potential water source | |

## 3. Legal approach

3.1 Over the coming months we need to work with Anglian Water to develop a draft 'Statement of Common Ground' and identify any 'Principle Areas of Disagreement'.

In terms of our external legal costs, Anglian Water have confirmed that they are prepared to cover the reasonable costs associated with activities that assist in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process/implementation of the scheme. This would be Anglian Water covering legal costs associated with:

1. The drafting, negotiation and completion of any legal agreements for the protection of MLC's assets (as a result of the DCO).

2. The drafting, negotiation and completion of any legal agreements in relation to operational matters required to be agreed/formalised to allow the DCO to be implemented/operate.
3. The drafting and negotiation of any protective provisions on the face of the DCO.
4. Entering into, and review of, the Statement of Common Ground (SoCGs)

Anglian Water would <u>not</u> expect to cover <u>any legal costs</u> related to activities such as:

1. Review of consultation and other materials and the drafting/review of consultation responses
2. Drafting/review of relevant and written representations during the DCO examination.
3. Drafting of responses to Examining Authority posed questions directly to MLC.
4. Drafting/review of any other written submissions during the DCO examination (e.g. Principle Areas of Disagreement (PADSS)).
5. Attendance at hearings.

3.2 We approached several external solicitors with experience in DCOs and are due to get into contract with our preferred supplier in January 2025.

3.3 For the Fens Reservoir, if the Middle Level Commissioners (including their employees and consultants) are to act on behalf of the MLC and IDBs they administer in a manner that is legally robust for a scheme of this complexity and significance, it is prudent to secure specific delegations and authority from each organisation.

3.4 Acting as one will enable efficiencies, increase agility, improve responsiveness and help manage and mitigate conflict of interests that some individual MLC/IDB Board Members have with the Fens Reservoir.

3.5 Acting independently would mean each organisation may need different staffing and legal service arrangements to look after their individual interest, i.e. the MLC staffing structure would not be able to act for each IDB as well as the MLC. This is impractical. It is also unlikely we would be able to practically manage the terms of any security/non-disclosure requirements that come with a scheme of this type by acting independently.

3.6 As the Fens Reservoir Development Consent Order will disallow/overwrite exiting statutory powers held by the Middle Level Commissioners and IDBs, the Board is asked to acknowledge this need and delegate the decision-making authority to the Clerk engaging with the Chairman/Vice Chair as he sees fit.

**Author Name: Paul Burrows**
**Role: Clerk**

Mrs Martin drew the Boards attention to the Clerks Report. She advised that although this Board are not directly impacted by the scheme, all IDBs that gravity outfall or pump into the Middle Level watercourses also have an interest. She advised that the Middle Level Commissioners will be working with Anglian Water over the coming months in their development of the Development Consent Order, and MLC need to secure specific delegation authority from the Board in readiness for this. Therefore, the Board are asked to approve that they act as one with the Commissioners and other impacted IDBs, and to provide the relevant authorisations for staff and consultants. The Board are also advised that the Fens Reservoir DCO may need to overwrite/disallow existing statutory powers held by the Board, and that decision making on this is delegated to the Clerk and Chairman/Vice Chairman.

Mr Fenn reported that it was unlikely that the scheme would have any real impact on this Board, and that they would be unlikely to see any real impact on the water levels, especially as the Middle Level Commissioners were bounded by the statutory responsibilities in relation to Navigation.

RESOLVED

> 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.
>
> Acknowledge 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.427 Environment Officers' Report

Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **6** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS IDB** | **Subject:** | **ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 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 the environmental review and Biodiversity Action Plan update meeting has taken place with the relevant Board members in March. Please make interim provision for the new BAP to be reviewed, agreed and adopted prior to the next Board meeting.

C. Note that the new Hedgerow Regulations 2024 prohibits the cutting of any hedge growing on agricultural land between the 1st March - 31th August inclusive.

D. Be reminded that any non-routine maintenance including bank slip repairs or reprofiling, culvert installation or replacements, tree felling, established scrub removal and channel de-watering require environmental screening well ahead of the planned works, to ensure works are compliant, using the request form available on the MLC website: Conservation – Middle Level

E. Be aware that you will require licenced supervision of certain works that take place around badger setts, which MLC can provide.

F. Note that a Board Representative will be required to attend a biodiversity training day in 2025. Those who have some control over the works undertaken within the district is best placed to attend.

G. A reminder that the Board has a culverting policy and a presumption against culverting unless no other feasible option is available: Standing Advice – Middle Level.

H. Report bank slips that require remedial works as soon as they occur or are noticed.

## 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. This will take time and my ambition is to have a catalogue defined and ready to implement on 1st April 2026.

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

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

**Background**

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

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

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

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

**Going forward**

As outlined at the Chairs meeting in December 2024, we have developed an Environmental Service Package that aims to support IDBs to achieve <u>minimum statutory environmental compliance</u>. 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:<br>• Screening and assessment of non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process.<br>• Preliminary habitat and species surveys & reporting*<br>• Ad-hoc advice and guidance.<br>• Initial advice & communications for pollution incidents<br>• INNS identification and advice.<br>• 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.<br>• Review must include budget setting & expenditure recording for reporting to Defra (IDB1).<br>• Review & assessment of proposed annual programme of works prior to Board approval.<br>• BAP report & review for Board. | **1.25** |
| 3. | **Planning Ecology Services** | • Up to 1 day for consent applications advice & guidance^<br>• 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. The Ecology and Environmental Services team are keen to meet with you to discuss this further as part of your scheduled environmental review in the coming weeks and months.

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

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

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

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

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

**2) The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024**

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

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

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

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

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

**3) Licensing of IDB works around badger setts.**

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

**4) Improved advice and guidance provision:**

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

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

**Author Name: Sofi Lloyd**
**Role: Ecology and Environmental Services Manager**

Mr Lakey referred to the Environment Officer's Report, advising that the report would be taken as read. He reminded the Board of the Revised Environmental Services Package and associated fee increase.

Mr Lakey advised that the Biodiversity Action Plan has developed over a number of years and there is a legal requirement that it is reviewed every 5 years. Every IDB has one, and it acknowledges protected species in the system and how to remain compliant. This year is the review year, and the Chairman has met with Abigail Leach, MLC Ecologist, to carry out this year's BAP Visit.

All Board members were asked if they notice any protected species in the Boards areas to please advise straight away, especially as some species attract grant which may be available to the Board. Flail and excavator drivers have also received some further training. The Chair advised that he thinks that the Board can work within the restrictions.

Mr Lakey thought that everything the Board is doing already is pretty good and the BAP has shown this. The high priority drains are more intensely managed, therefore meaning lower priority areas are less intensely managed. Any changes to management need documenting, but this does not mean that changes cannot be made.

Water vole surveys must be carried out for any spade in the ground works. It is requested that any bank slips are reported as soon as they are identified. A survey carried out as soon as possible after the slip may show that there were no water voles at that time. However, if it is left until harvest for example, voles may have recolonised which then affects when works can be done, so please report any slips as soon as possible.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Report be approved.

B.428 Chairman's Items

The Chairman advised that he had nothing particular to report. He said that as Board members, they just have to try to do their job, keeping the land drained whilst being compliant.

B.429 Consulting Engineers' Reports
Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | | **8** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)** | **Subject:** | **CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME** | |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | | **Nicola Oldfield** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

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

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

**1. Technical Services**

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

1.2 We are receiving an increased number of questions from developers ahead of planning applications/consent applications, with an expectation that we can provide the information freely. We have completed the review of our charging model, and we will be introducing a new charging model for answering these questions if applicants do not enter into a pre-app agreement.

Please refer to item 4 in the Clerks report.

**The Board is asked to acknowledge this approach.**

2. Summary of Key Planning Issues

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

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

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

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

During August the Boards' Chairs were given the opportunity to comment on the issues raised within the draft consultation document and provide comments and any other related items of unease that the Boards had.
A response, which was primarily providing answers to specific questions, was submitted before the deadline.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<u>Outwell</u>

**Residential development on land at 34 Isle Bridge Road, Outwell - Mr D Cuckow (MLC Ref Nos 203, 210, 309, 331, 358 & 361) & Welcombe Homes Ltd (MLC Ref No 369 & 433)**

Further to the Boards 2023 Meeting Report, an application to Discharge Planning Conditions 5 and 10 were submitted to the Borough Council in December 2023. A review of the documents on the Councils Public Access Simple Search webpage identifies that in response to the application to discharge Planning Condition 5, which relates to drainage related issues, BHA Consulting Ltd., who are believed to provide a consultancy service to the Borough Council, states that:

"Full details of the surface water drainage arrangements will be required prior to discharge of this condition…"

before advising on what is required and adding that:

"… the local IDB should be contacted, and discharge consents applied for as evidence of these consents will be required prior to discharge of this condition.
Details of future maintenance and management responsibilities of all surface water drainage features should also be provided prior to discharge of the drainage condition."

A copy of an e-mail interchange between the Borough Council, referring to BHA Consulting Ltd's comments, and the applicants agent, Anglia Building Consultants, can be viewed at 22_01112_O-DISC_A_AGENT_RESPONSE_TO_OFFICER-5583933.pdf.

The points raised do not appear to have been resolved and the Board may wish to:

A. Confirm this with the Borough Council and/or
B. Remind the applicant of its responsibilities in respect of the Boards Byelaws.

**Re-Development of the former Doug Clark Produce Ltd site to east of Fenway, Basin Road, Outwell (MLC Ref Nos 319/PL/156, 190, 218, 221, 247, 268, 296 & 419)**

Further to previous Meeting Reports a site meeting attended by the relevant parties including the Boards Chair and V-C was held in early July. This was viewed positively and determined a potential "way forward".

A basic proposal for the realigned open watercourse was submitted for consideration soon afterwards and a delayed response to the applicant's agent advised of the Boards initial main concerns:

A. The close proximity of the proposed route to the existing AWSL Rising Main;
B. Any adverse impacts on the Boards system should it fail and
C. Any restrictions that may be imposed upon the Boards routine maintenance operations.
   Presumably, the works will be subject to AWSL'S normal requirements and suitable correspondence confirming this will be required.

Some advisory guidance has been provided to the applicant's agent.
Documents on the Borough Councils webpage infer that a plan is being prepared but at the time of writing no further information or submission has been proposed.

The Borough Councils Case Officer has been kept informed of the position.

**Development at Whetsone Way, Outwell – Renham Services Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 322 & 338) and Client of Stirling Maynard and Partners Ltd (MLC Ref No 364) and CKH Developments Ltd (MLC Ref No 403)**

A response from either the applicant or its planning consultant, The Pegasus Group, confirming the position is currently awaited.

**Residential development on land west of Tikka Chef (Orchard End Close), Isle Road, Outwell – Beech Property Investments Ltd (MLC Ref No 347), Partner Construction (MLC Ref No 364) & NFC Homes (MLC Ref No 377) & Freebridge Community Housing (MLC Ref Nos 392 & 409)**

Further to the last Board Meeting the applicant's agent, The Design Partnership (Ely) Ltd., has provided the following update:

"Currently the site is moving ahead; half the plots are approximately up to roof level, and the other 20 plots are at approximately beam and block level.

The attenuation basin was formed on site in September 2023 but is not yet connected to the SW drainage system for the site as that is not close to be completed."

Concerns about the attenuation basin remain as it does not appear to be lined and therefore may be subject to infiltration from groundwater which will affect its storage capacity. It may also be difficult to maintain.

**A general view of the site**

**A view of the empty attenuation basin**

**Agricultural/Haulage Yard development at The Myrtles (Mill Farm), Pius Drove, Upwell – Robinsons Farms (MLC Ref No 386)**

Following a previous Board request to issue a notice to the applicant the applicant has advised that:

The application Borough Council Ref. 21/00574/F for a Weighbridge Office Welfare and Sampling Laboratory was never built due to rising costs due to covid.
A storage facility was built on the same property Borough Council Ref. 20/01812/AG with the surface water for this building originally being stored in tanks and reused for washing of crop, However, this has subsequently changed with only 50% of the surface water being used for this purpose.
The method of disposal for the remainder is currently being investigated.

**District Wide**

**Grantham to Bexwell potable water supply Pipeline in the Needham Field/Molls Drove/Bramble Lane area – Anglian Water Services Ltd** (MLC Ref Nos 380, 385 & 397)

Anglian Waters Strategic Pipelines webpage (Our strategic pipelines) advises that:

"With the wettest winter on record from 2023 to 2024 and exceptional circumstances for large infrastructure projects in the UK, the programme schedule has been impacted. As a result, we have rephased some of the work planned in the region."

adding that:

"….pipelaying will recommence from Etton to Bexwell in spring 2025."

Anglian Water have advised that it seeks guidance on some slight changes to its methodology and design for some locations that have previously been consented by the Boards involved. It has been found that the exposed separation membrane attracts water voles which results in a higher risk of adverse impacts that results in delays.

Additionally, they have questioned the cutting and water level management regimes for the proposed route as this may affect the pipelaying work.

Revised details, as agreed with Natural England, and location plans where higher populations have been found are currently being considered.

**3. Planning Updates & Consultations**

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

**A. Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk**

Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Show people Potential Sites and Policy Consultation (January – March 2024)

The updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was published in June 2023, as part of the ongoing Local Plan examination. This was followed by an initial Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Show people Potential Sites and Policy consultation (January – March 2024).

Several potential sites at two locations within the Boards District were identified at Small Lode and Botany Bay (Pinfold Road/Stonehouse Road) both in Upwell.

Following on from the earlier consultation, a list of proposed site allocations for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people was approved by the Council for submission to the Planning Inspectors as part of the ongoing Local Plan examination, on 25 April 2024.

This second consultation related to the ongoing Local Plan examination. Any representations received were collated and forwarded onto the appointed Planning Inspectors. These were utilised by the Inspectors to set agendas for the examination hearing sessions that were scheduled to take place, 3 and 4 September 2024.

**B. Norfolk County Council**

**Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan**

The draft Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (NM&WLP) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2023 for examination. Examination hearings led by an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State took place in July 2024. As set out in the hearings there were a number of main modifications required to the Plan in order for the Inspector to consider whether it is sound and legally compliant. Proposed Main Modifications have been prepared, and Norfolk County Council has been notified by the Inspector that the representations period on these modifications could proceed.

The Main Modifications together with updated Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) were available for representations to be made on, along with consequent Policies Map changes.

All duly made representations received were submitted to the Planning Inspector and considered as part of the Examination.

Alongside the Main Modifications, a schedule of proposed Additional Modifications was also published for information and comment. The proposed Additional Modifications do not form part of the examination of the Plan but are minor changes factual changes which Norfolk County Council intends to make on adoption of the NM&WLP.

**C. Fenland District Council**

**Fenland Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Consultation**

This high level document is currently the subject of a consultation.

It is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of their Local Plan. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is an iterative process which forms an integral to the plan making process and is used to appraise the social, environmental, and economic effects of the Local Plan.

It should provide a sound evidence base for the plan, form an integrated part of the plan preparation process and will help ensure that decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The SA Scoping Report is the first stage in the SA process. Through an assessment of the current situation in Fenland, the SA Scoping Report identifies which issues need to be addressed and identifies objectives to test the Plan and policies against. This assessment will help to establish the Issues, Vision and Objectives of the emerging Local Plan.

The document is primarily aimed at Historic England, Natural England and The Environment Agency but comments are welcome from any organisation or individual.

At the time of writing the document is being considered with the intention of issuing a response by the deadline.

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

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

A. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

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

B. Community Flood Action programme

Further copies of the Community Flood and Water newsletter have been issued. You can view previous editions and subscribe to receive the newsletter automatically at Community flood action programme | Cambridgeshire County Council.

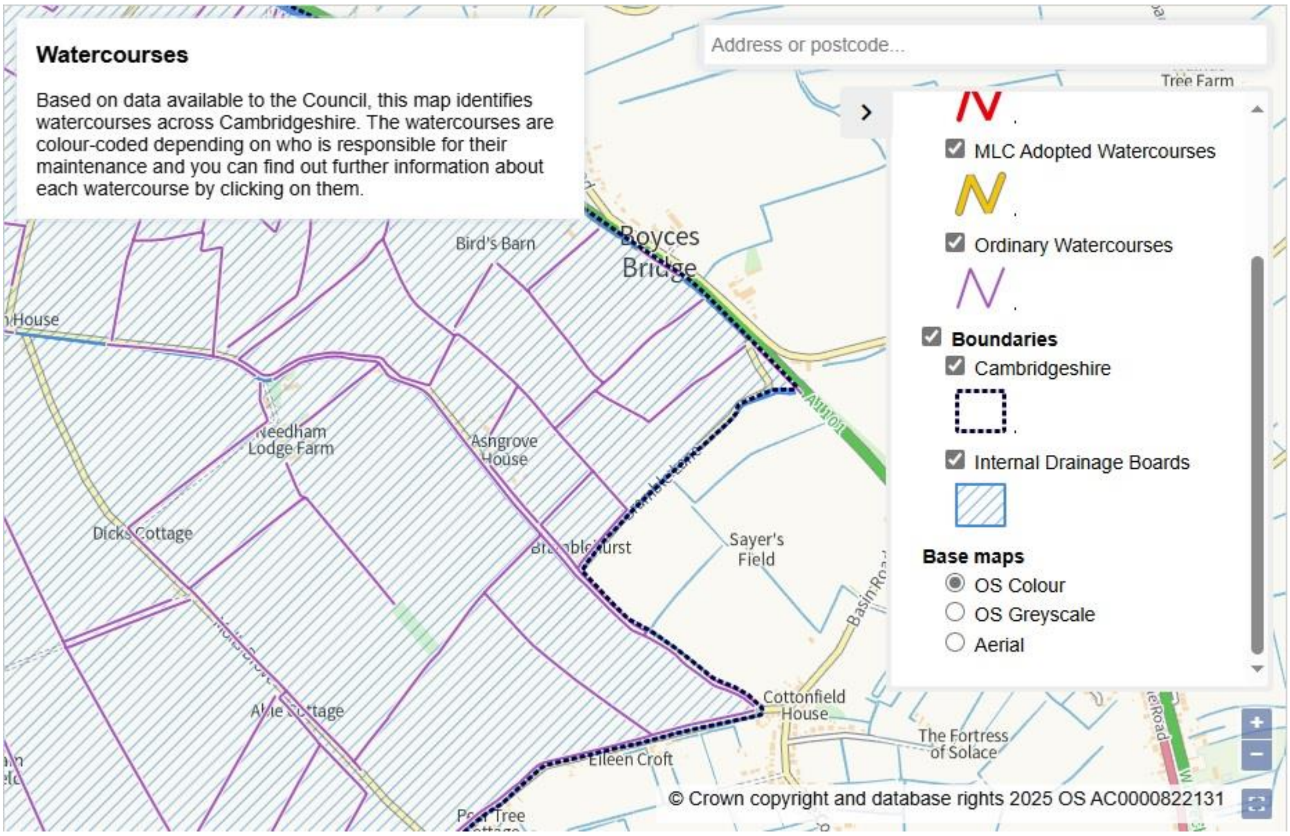
C. Watercourse Mapping Tool

The Flood Risk team has published a Watercourse Mapping Tool - Watercourse management | Cambridgeshire County Council

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

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

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



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

3.2 Culvert Replacements at Points 1 & 2

Further discussions took place in January 2025 with the contractor, regarding the 5% retention (approximately £4,300) still held and the potential works to mitigate the issue of the steeper banks and wider area being used as a passing place by vehicles. Due to potential issues with installing the fence as previously planned and discussed with Cambridgeshire County Council, the option to install a small pimple bank along the existing drain bank instead, is being explored as a low cost/low maintenance solution to fencing that will inevitably require future maintenance at the Boards own expense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**4. IDB Recovery Fund T2B**

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

A bid was submitted on behalf of the Board for works at Point 50 as part of an IDB package but was subsequently withdrawn when confirmation of funding was delayed, preventing delivery in-year.

Works were included in a second bid for Tranche 2B to be delivered be March 2026, but the bid was unsuccessful.

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

**5. Capital Programme**

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

5.2 There are no works currently identified in the Board's Capital Programme.

**Author Name: Nicola Oldfield**
**Role: Chief Engineer**

**Appendix 1: List of applications since last meeting**
**Appendix 2: MLC001: Middle Level System Flood & Drainage Infrastructure Capacity**
**Appendix 3: Operational Services Report**

**Appendix 1**

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

| MLC Ref. | Council Ref. | Applicant | Type of Development | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 429 | F/YR24/0431/AG1 | A G Scott & Son | Agricultural | Laddus Drove, Friday Bridge |
| 430 | 24/00993/F | Mr & Mrs Webb | Residence (Extension) | The Cottons, Outwell |
| 431 | 24/01027/PACU3 | Mr & Mrs E Broad | Conversion (Agricultural to 5 Dwellings) | Pius Drove, Upwell |
| 432 | 21/01506/DISC_C | Outwell Timber & Builders Merchants Ltd | Conversion (Residential to Commercial) | Isle Road, Outwell |
| 433 | 24/01033/RM | Welcombe Homes Ltd | Residence | Robbs Chase, Outwell |
| 434 | 24/01255/F | Mr D Hartley | Conversion (Office to Dwelling) | Town Street, Upwell |
| 435 | 24/01367/F | E Holding | Residence (Extension) | The Cottons, Outwell |
| 436 | - | Client of Fendraw Design & Planning | Replacement Foul water disposal system | Molls Drove, Friday Bridge |
| 437 | 25/00008/F | Mr M Henson | Residence (Extension with garage and sun room) | Town Street, Upwell |
| 438 | 25/00005/PREAPP | Mr McKeon | Residence (New dwelling) | The Cottons, Outwell |
| 439 | 21/01506/DISC_D | Outwell Timber & Building Supplies | Conversion (Residence to Commercial) | Isle Road, Outwell |
| 440 | 25/00007/PREAPP | Mr P Tibbs | Residential (Proposed development) | Pius Drove, Upwell |

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

| MLC Ref | Council Ref | Consent No | Applicant | Description of Works | Location | Date consent granted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 319/1 | - | NL/BC/06 | D G Bullard | Installation of 13 No. agricultural field drains with headwalls and marker posts | District watercourse between Points 9 & 13 | 27/08/2024 |
| 319/1 | - | NL/BC/07 | Martin & Sons (March) Ltd | Installation of 14 No. agricultural field drains and outfalls | District watercourse between Points 3 & 4 | 21/10/2024 |
| 420 | F/YR23/0821/F | NL/BC/08 | Mr A Bunton | Erection of a 2-storey front and side extensions, a detached garage and the formation of a new access culvert | Needham Bank, Friday Bridge | 28/11/2024 |

There have been no Byelaw Consent (to discharge to a watercourse) or infiltration device applications granted since the last meeting.

**Appendix 2**

middle level commissioners

*Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862*

# Standing Advice Note MLC001:

## Middle Level Flood and Drainage Infrastructure Capacity

## Issued: 01 May 2024 (Version 1)

**Key messages**

A. **Our flood and drainage infrastructure should be considered as 'at capacity' during October to April.**
B. **Unless there is a compelling exception case, we will not consent surface water discharges greater than greenfield run-off rate and/or any new water entering our catchment across a watershed.**
C. **We consider that the cumulative impact of attenuating surface water from developments and timing of discharges has been to elongate the duration that our system is under stress. This increases our operational costs and could increase the risk of flooding.**
D. **We are concerned that there is seemingly no post-construction review of SuDS against their design and performance reviews through their lifecycle. Therefore, even well-designed SuDS may not be performing as expected/consented and there may be a cumulative impact of this across our catchment. Long term appropriate maintenance and inspection is considered a deficiency.**
E. **The opportunity to release stored water into our system during May to September should be actively explored within strategic flood risk assessments, development masterplans and local flood risk management strategies and in consultation with our engineers.**
F. **In considering and granting planning permission, Local Planning Authorities need to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development upon their special levy and future funding requests under Defra's Partnership Funding policy. It should be noted that under this policy housing built or converted after January 2012 is not included within FCRM government grant-in-aid calculations.**
G. **Prior to granting outline planning permission, Local Planning Authorities must consider whether any proposed Biodiversity Net Gain provisions will be compatible with the flood risk management activities undertaken by MLC and other IDBs, for the full 30-year registration period. If this is not known, the LPA should seek advice from MLC prior to granting outline planning permission.**
H. **In considering and granting planning permission, Local Planning Authorities ought to secure funding from developers towards future capital investment in our water management infrastructure.**
I. **The Environment Agency needs to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development and sub-optimal SuDS upon the Highland Water claims from the Middle Level Commissioners.**
J. **As statutory consultees and fellow Risk Management Authorities under the Flood & Water Management Act, Lead Local Flood Authorities and the Environment Agency need to consider and reflect this advice within their responses to Local Planning Authorities so as not to increase flood risk within the Middle Level.**

K. **Developers and Local Planning Authorities ought to consider the adoption of measures such as rainwater harvesting and re-use to avoid as much water as possible from entering the drainage network.**
L. **When considering abstraction licences for unrestricted winter fill applications from irrigators within the Middle Level catchment, the Environment Agency should take account of the potential benefit to the capacity of the system, operational costs, Highland Water costs and their responsibility to reduce flood risk within their determinations.**
M. **In addressing historic mis-connections to the foul sewer network and within changes to discharges of treated effluent water, Anglian Water and Local Authorities need to appreciate the potential impact on the surface water drainage network and receiving system.**
N. **Internal Drainage Boards within the Middle Level catchment may wish to consider adopting similar Standing Advice. They also need to appreciate and plan for the limitations in the capacity of the MLC system withing their own pumping station improvement schemes.**

**Advice Primarily For:**

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

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

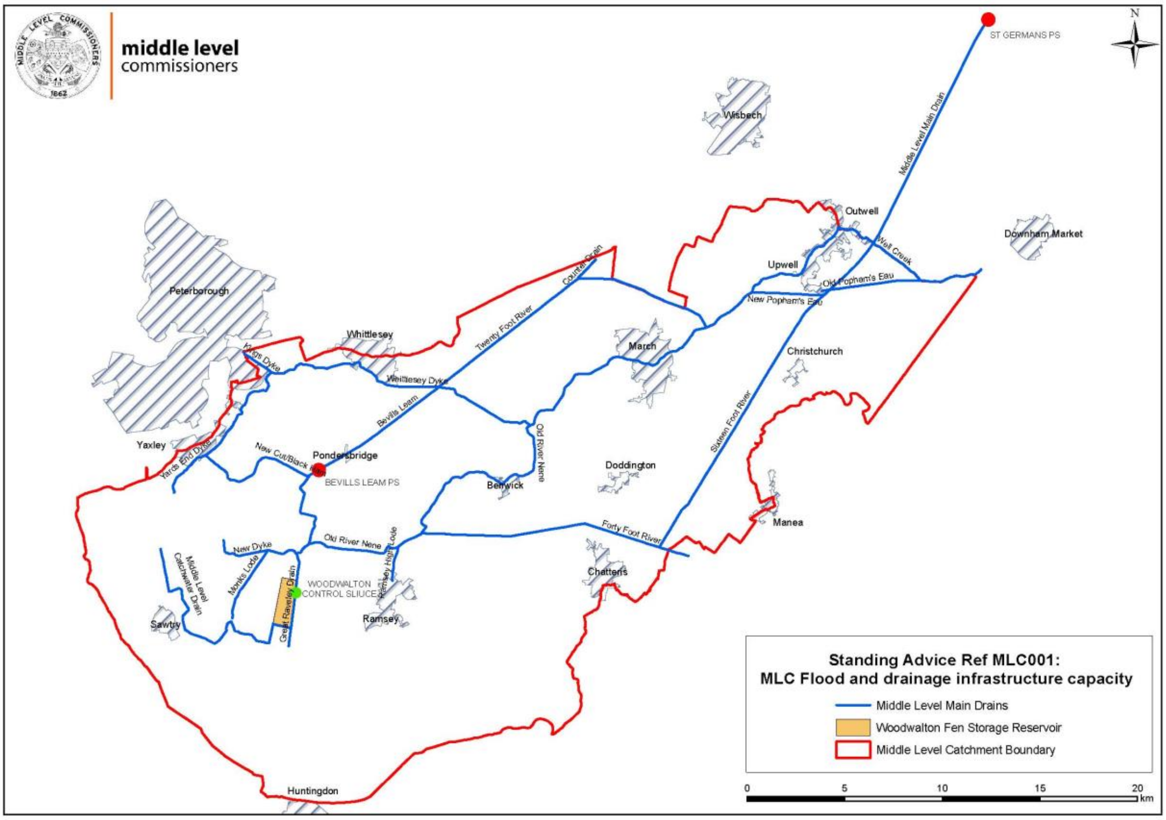
The Commissioners elect a Board and, via an Executive Committee, appoint a Chief Executive who leads a staffing structure to deliver their various statutory duties and responsibilities.

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

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

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

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




**Our system:**

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

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

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

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

The biggest operational challenge we have in times of flood concern is the ability to get vast amounts of water through Bevills Leam Pumping Station and then through the main system (high level carriers and embanked watercourses) to St Germans. Both Stations need to pump early to lower water levels, creating a 'hole' which then draws water to them, given the fact there is no fall/gradient in their respective ponds.

Our system is effectively a giant bowl, with the Bevills Pond being a bowl within that giant bowl. The Bevills Pond is a greater concern in terms of capacity than the St Germans Pond and is considered particularly vulnerable to intense, repeat and elongated rainfall and run-off.

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

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

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

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

1 May 2024

**Appendix 3**

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | Item No: | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS DDC** | **Subject:** | **CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Morgan Lakey** |

**1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance**

1.1 The weed control and drain maintenance strategy generally accorded with the programme approved by the Board at its last annual meeting.

A joint inspection of the District was undertaken pre-harvest last year with the Board's Chair and Vice-Chair. The inspection revealed that although some drains contained growths of filamentous algae (Cott) and sporadic stands of emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation, the majority were found to be in a satisfactory condition. Works programmes were also discussed and it was agreed for an herbicide application and additional contracted weed raking to be undertaken where deemed necessary.

Please refer to the plan on the following page indicating the reaches where machine cleansing was deemed necessary to retain the Board's drains in a satisfactory condition.

A recent inspection of the Board's drains revealed the majority are in a good condition and being maintained to a high standard. Due to the cold winter experienced this year, there is little sign of vegetation growth and only evidence of last year's successful herbicide application. Reach 42-43, downstream of Dodd's Stile, has evidence of sporadic stands of emergent aquatic vegetation. A second inspection will be carried out post-harvest and any required works included in the ensuing years maintenance programme.

Clear drains along Reach 40-41

Reach 42-43, to be monitored for maintenance requirements

As the Board's annual meeting falls during the early part of the growing season, a second District inspection will be required during the summer months to accurately identify additional maintenance requirements, and the weed basket works within the Laddus Drove area. A provisional sum, based on previous years' expenditure, has been allocated within the Board's estimated costs, for works that are likely to be required.

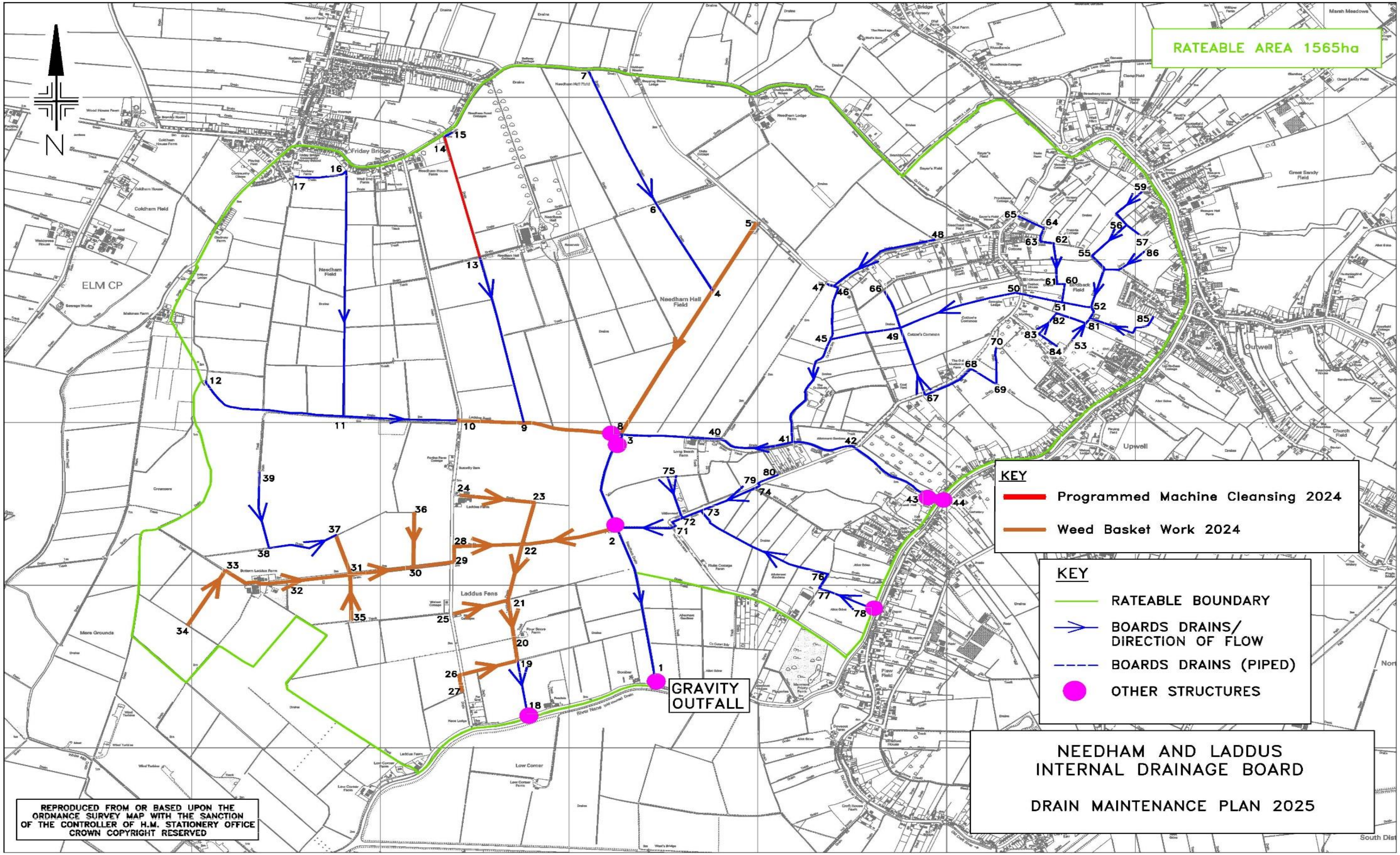
Harrison Agricultural Contractors have indicated that they are available to undertake the Board's flail mowing and tractor mounted bucket requirements for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing District drains has been included within the estimate.

The estimated costs of this year's recommended Weed Control and Drain Maintenance works follows. A provisional sum has also been included within the Board's budget to allow for any emergency machine cleansing, bank slip repair or culvert clearance works required later in the season.

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

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 *Provisional Sum* | | | £ |
| Allow sum for Roundup application to Board's drains where it is required | Item | Sum | 800.00 |
| Allow sum for Machine Cleansing and Weed /Cott removal from Board's Drains | Item | Sum | 8625.00 |
| *Estimated Sum* Flail mowing Board's Drains | Item | Sum | 7000.00 |
| *Provisional Item* Allow for emergency machine cleansing, culvert clearance or bank slip repair works. Removal of fly tipped materials. | Item | Sum | 2000.00 |
| Fees for inspection, preparation and Submission of report to the Board, arrangement and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works | Item | Sum | 1500.00 |
| | TOTAL | | £ 19,925.00 |

**Author Name: Morgan Lakey**
**Role: Operations Manager**


RATEABLE AREA 1565ha
N
ELM CP
Friday Bridge
Needham Hall Field
Laddus Fens
Upwell
Outwell
GRAVITY OUTFALL
KEY
Programmed Machine Cleansing 2024
Weed Basket Work 2024
KEY
RATEABLE BOUNDARY
BOARDS DRAINS/ DIRECTION OF FLOW
BOARDS DRAINS (PIPED)
OTHER STRUCTURES
NEEDHAM AND LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
DRAIN MAINTENANCE PLAN 2025
REPRODUCED FROM OR BASED UPON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP WITH THE SANCTION OF THE CONTROLLER OF H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED

The Board considered the reports of the Consulting Engineers, and taking the report as read Mrs Martin drew the Board's attention to some of the items contained within the Consulting Engineers' report.

Residential Development on land at 34 Isle Bridge Road, Outwell – Mr D Cuckow (MLC Ref Nos 203, 210, 309, 331, 358 & 361) & Welcombe Homes Ltd (MLC Ref No 369 & 433).

The Planning Engineer has asked for the Board's guidance on the issues identified within the report, asking if the Board wish to confirm with the Borough Council that the points raised have not been resolved and/or reminding the applicant of its responsibilities in respect of the Boards Byelaws. The Board asked the Planning Engineer to pursue this issue.

Re-development of the former Doug Clark Prduce Ltd site to east of Fenway, Basin Road, Outwell (MLC Ref nos 319/PL/156, 190, 218, 221, 247, 268, 296 & 419)

Mr Lakey reported that some information has been received in relation to this application, but that the development is still very close to the Anglian Water main which may have a significant impact on the Boards system should it fail. The Board asked that the Planning Engineer continues to pursue this.

Standing Advice Note

Mrs Martin advised that the Middle Level Commissioners have published a 'standing advice note', effectively declaring that the Middle Level flood and drainage infrastructure is 'at capacity'. The Board have been asked to confirm whether it wishes to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.
Mr Lakey advised that for the Board this means that they will accept greenfield run off rate and not unattenuated rates for any developments. As the Middle Level Commissioners' system that the Board gravitates to is at capacity, then this Board is at capacity by default.

Mr Fenn highlighted his concern about the culvert at Point 50, the aging concrete culvert which is 600mm in diameter and located below The Cottons. There is a lot of infill development in the area, giving concern as this is a low wet area and culvert is in a precarious condition. A grant bid application to replace the culvert was unsuccessful. The Board also has other structures within the system that restrict additional flows.

Current indications are that there will be no funding allocation within the current spending review period but there are no works currently identified in the Board's Capital Programme. The Chair acknowledged the importance of building funds just in case. The next review period is not yet known but likely to be 2027. Mr Lakey suggested that the Board could consider replacement of the culvert in future bids based on current criteria. Mr Fenn suggested that the Board could consider taking out a Public Works Loan in an emergency.

RESOLVED

> That the Board wishes to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

Operational Services Report

Mr Lakey reported that the last year went as normal with no great issues. He drew the Boards attention to the Operational Services Report, detailing works undertaken last year and the district inspection, advising that the drains are in good condition. Mr Lakey advised that one section was missed which will be included in this year's maintenance. He referred to Reach 42-43 downstream of Dodds Stile, as pictured in the report, and advised that this reach would get done this year. The Estimated Costs were as listed, and Nigel Harrison is available if the Board are happy to continue using him to carry out maintenance.

Some Board members reported issues with damage to Land Drain Markers, and Mr Lakey agreed to mention this to Nigel Harrison. It was established that as Mr Harrison works on an hourly basis, there is no form of contract in place that makes provision for the payment of damages although it was acknowledged that if the works were let on a fixed priced contract basis, the costs would be significantly higher than at present. Mr J Scott felt that the issue needed resolving as it is a serious issue, and the Chair asked Mr Lakey to discuss further with Mr Harrison, adding that the Board would rather see a good job done slower rather than quicker with damage.

RESOLVED

That Mr Lakey speak to Nigel Harrison regarding the damage to Land Drain Markers.

That the reports be approved.

B.430 Health & Safety
Viz:

Cope
SAFETY MANAGEMENT

## Site Safety Inspection Record

Needham and Laddus IDB

Complete

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of organisation:** | Needham and Laddus IDB |
| **Date of site visit** | 12.02.2025 09:04 GMT |
| **Address of inspected premises** | Middle Level Offices<br>85 Whittlesey Road<br>Cambridgeshire<br>PE15 0AH |
| **Name of Advisor** | Martin Clark |
| **Time of arrival at site:** | 12.02.2025 10:40 GMT |
| **Audit Name** | Needham and Laddus IDB |

| Audit | |
|---|---|
| **An opening meeting was held with**<br>Martin Isaacson | |
| **Have there been any accidents since our last visit?**<br>None recorded. | No |
| **Have there been any new starters since our last visit?**<br>None recorded. | No |

**1**

The sluice at Point 2 was visited. As discussed the steps leading to the walkways require clearing to reduce the potential slip / trip hazard.

The general condition of walkways and handrails etc was observed to be good and no significant issues were reported.

The location of point 2 being surrounded by farmland with potential public access was discussed however it was understood that footfall is likely to be very low and therefore no additional signage etc is required.


Photo 1


Photo 2


Photo 3


Photo 4

**Photographic Risk Assessment**

Signature of person informed

Signature of person informed 1

**Signature of person informed**

Martin
16.02.2025 22:14 GMT

**Advisor's signature**

Martin Clark
16.02.2025 22:14 GMT

| | |
|---|---|
| **Departure time** | 12.02.2025 12:14 GMT |

**Photographic Risk Assessments closed out during the visit.**

Nil

| | |
|---|---|
| **Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments** | 0<br>From 0 to 99 |

**Media summary**

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

The Chairman referred to the report received from Cope Safety Management following their visit to the district, on the 12th February 2025. Martyn Isaacson from Middle Level Commissioners represented the Board.

An inspection of Point 2 was carried out, and the Chair reported that no accidents recorded. The Board expressed their satisfaction with the report.

Mr Fenn advised the Board of two overspills in the roadway to Deptford's Farm. The steps get overgrown, and maintenance of the vegetation over the steps is needed. He knows of a local contractor that would strim down the area 2 or 3 times a year for a small fee. Mr West agreed that this maintenance would make sense and Mr Lakey advised that improved maintenance of the area would provide better bank protection. The Board agreed for Mr Fenn to arrange the works.

B.431 District Officers Report

A verbal report was given by Mr J Fenn on behalf of the District Officer, Mr M Fenn, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr Fenn reported on the known issue in Common Road, Upwell where a bungalow hedge grows onto the roadway, subsequently pushing vehicles onto side of the drain. There is some concern that this may cause the drain to collapse and is being monitored.

Overall, the drains are in very good condition. Dodds Stile drain needs to be worked on if access can be obtained. Mr Lakey advised that the landowner has been amenable when carrying out works before, and Mr Fenn advised that the Board need to work with him to ensure we gain access. Mr Lakey suggested that they Board may have to look at an alternative approach.

The District Officer has fitted the Overspill Boards in on Main Drain prior to today's rain. Not all have been fitted, and it is thought that there is one left to fit. He is concerned that the people putting in the pipeline may have issues with the water table.

Mr Fenn referred to the culvert replacement works at the March Riverside Main Outfall. Tom Pollendine is looking at the outfall and installing rails, posts and signs, although Mr Fenn not sure if these are needed. It is proposed to use the £4k retention held of Fen Group to pay for the works. Chair asked if this was worth doing, as it is likely that farm machinery would damage these, creating an ongoing repair issue for the Board. He suggested that the Highways Department are happy that they are not required as they have not seen the need to install any barriers, then the Board are also happy they are not needed. The Board therefore do not wish for this work to be done and would like the retention to be paid back to the Fen Group.

It has been observed that a connection has been made to Boards drain on Reach 24, at the rear of the Laddus Farm, and it is possible that raw sewerage has been disposed but not certain. A new manhole cover can be seen against the drain and it is assumed that this relates to one of the houses. The Chair stated that if this is done correctly and from a package treatment plant this should be 'clean' water. Mr Fenn agreed that this needs to be checked to ensure consent has been applied for.

Thanks were passed to District Officer for all of his work.

B.432 Governance

Viz:

| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **11** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD** | **Subject:** | **GOVERNANCE** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Paul Burrows** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider and approve the Annual Return 2023/2024
B. Consider and approve the Auditors Report for 2023/2024
C. Note the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.
D. Consider and approve of authorised officers for operational/regulatory roles
E. Consider and approve resolutions regarding new Responsible Finance Officer
F. Consider the pumping station valuation proposal
G. Review and approve the updated Policies included as appendix.
H. Review the updated Policy Statement included as appendix.
I. Consider and approve the Data Protection Officer
J. 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.
K. 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.
L. Exercise of Public Rights
M. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments
N. Note the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra.
O. Authorise the Chairman to sign the annual return for 2025.

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

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

1.2 The Board/Commissioners to consider:

- the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 1)
- the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2024. (Appendix 2)

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

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

**2. Internal Controls**

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

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

2.3 The Board needs to ensure there is adequate separation of duties within its running and decision making. Members are asked to refresh themselves as to the Member Code of Conduct (available within the Governance Documents on the Board's webpage) and ensure their declarations of interests are clear and up-to-date.

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

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

**3. Authorisations**

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

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

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

## 4. Responsible Finance Officer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5. Policy Reviews

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

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

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

**The Board are asked to review the updated Policy Statement. (Appendix 4)**

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

## 6. IDB1

### 6.1 Defra Reporting

All IDBs are required to report annually to Defra via an Annual Report called an IDB1 form. These reports are copied to the Environment Agency and to the relevant District Councils.

In September 2024 an updated form has been issued to cover the 2023/24 returns and is due for submission by 28 February 2025.

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

In summary:

- Breakdown with financial reporting of electricity and fuel cost
- Reporting on biodiversity enhancement expenditure alongside conservation
- Value of drainage rate debt
- Detail of any Public Sector Cooperation Agreements
- Whether a specific Board Member is focussed on ensuring that health and safety is considered within board decision making.
- Significant new reporting expectations in terms of public engagement, including media engagement, public meetings and public events.

6.2 The Board's IDB1 return to Defra for the year 2023/24 is included as Appendix 5.

**7. Annual Governance Statement:**

7.1 To review and complete the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2025. (Appendix 6)

**8. Exercise of Public Rights**

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

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

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

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

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

8.4 The Clerk to refer to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

**9. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments:**

9.1 The clerk to report.

**10. Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities**

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

**Author Name: Paul Burrows**
**Role: Clerk**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Appendix 1** | **Annual Return 2023/2024** |
| **Appendix 2** | **Audit Report 2023/2024** |
| **Appendix 3** | **Anti-Bribery & Financial Regulations Policies** |
| **Appendix 4** | **Policy Statement** |
| **Appendix 5** | **IDB1 2023/24** |
| **Appendix 6** | **Annual Governance Statement 2025** |

**Appendix 1**

## Needham & Laddus Internal Drainage Board

### Notice of conclusion of the audit

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

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

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

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

The Clerk
Needham & Laddus Internal Drainage Board
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Board

Date of Announcement: 22nd August 2024

# Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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**During** the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

| Internal control objective | Yes | No* | Not covered** |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year. | ✓ | | |
| B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for. | ✓ | | |
| C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these. | ✓ | | |
| D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate. | ✓ | | |
| E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for. | ✓ | | |
| F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for. | ✓ | | |
| G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied. | ✓ | | |
| H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained. | ✓ | | |
| I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year. | ✓ | | |
| J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded. | ✓ | | |
| K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")* | | | ✓ |
| L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation. | ✓ | | |
| M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)*. | ✓ | | |
| N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)*. | ✓ | | |

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

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 17/04/2024 22/04/2024 24/04/2024

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

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

Date: 24/04/2024

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

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

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

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

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

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

16/04/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

B. 419

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

Chair J. J. Martin.

Clerk [signature]

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## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

| | Year ending | | Notes and guidance |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 31 March 2023 £ | 31 March 2024 £ | Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records. |
| 1. Balances brought forward | 120,616 | 114,512 | *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 | 52,391 | 52,391 | *Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.* |
| 3. (+) Total other receipts | 130,716 | 1,404 | *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 | 189,211 | 49,036 | *Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).* |
| 7. (=) Balances carried forward | 114,512 | 119,271 | *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 | 103,700 | 137,663 | *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 | 0 | 0 | *The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.* |
| 10. Total borrowings | 0 | 0 | *The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).* |

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

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

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

Date 05/04/2024

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

16/04/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

B. 420

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

J.J. Martin.

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

In respect of **Needham and Laddus internal Drainage Board – DB0058**

## 1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

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

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

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

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

## 2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2023/24

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

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

None

## 3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

External Auditor Name

**PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP**

External Auditor Signature: PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date: 15/08/2024

**Appendix 2**

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

BB/MM053
30 June 2024

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

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

**MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2023-2024**

Having completed the internal audit work for the various Internal Drainage Boards administered by the Middle Level Commissioners officers for the year ended 31 March 2024, we are pleased to provide you with the following recommendations to be considered for implementation. We have included some general points and some points which are related to specific boards.

**General points**

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

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

**2. Employee Benefits**

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

**3. Provisions**

We are pleased to note that, in the main; provisions recognised within the accounts of applicable boards are being monitored and written back as required. There are still isolated cases where provisions are "brought forward and carried forward" that relate in excess of the standard life of debt, being 6 years. Whilst we are satisfied there is reasonable rationale for their retention we would question whether payments could be reinforced if the life of debt has been exceeded, with the exception of amounts recognised in respect of development contributions. We would encourage continued review of provisions brought forward from prior years, especially those exceeding the standard life of debt, writing these off as appropriate, with board approval as appropriate.

*Client comment:*

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

**4. Budget figures**

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

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

*Client comment:*

*As part of the finance regulations, we are required to carry out a budget monitoring exercise during the course of the year. For those Boards that have a relevant meeting, this is reviewed by the Board at their autumn/winter meeting. For all other Boards the monitoring exercise is completed as at the end of the calendar year, at this point the majority of the drain maintenance works have been completed, as would be any planned maintenance works at pumping stations. The expenditure to-date is then forecast to the end of the financial year and compared to the budget and initially sent to the chairman for review. Depending on the outcome of the monitoring exercise depends on whether it is considered appropriate to hold an emergency meeting. However, it is likely that if there were an extraordinary event the Board would be aware "in real time" and appropriate action taken at that point.*

*It is not policy to update budgets depending on levels of expenditure as there is no ability to increase revenue through rates and special levy once they have been set. The original budget is therefore used as comparative to analyse variances of actual expenditure against.*

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

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

**5. Surplus Funds**

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

*Client comment0:*

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

**6. Rental of Land**

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

**7. Financial Regulations**

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

*Client comments:*

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

**8. Bank Transfers**

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

**10. Website Publication**

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

**Specific Points**

**Nightlayers IDB**

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

**Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB – Joint Pumping Arrangement**

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

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

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

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

*Client comment:*

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

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

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

**March East IDB**

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

*Client comment:*

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

**Hundred of Wisbech**

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

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

We look forward to reviewing this in due course.

*Client comment:*

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

**Manea & Welney**

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP

**Appendix 3**

middle level commissioners

***And administered IDBs***

## Governance

## Anti Bribery Policy

*(includes gifts, hospitality & donations)*

## 2024 - 2029

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

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

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

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

**Risk Assessment**

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

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

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

- Bribery by others to secure business from the MLC/IDB
- Bribery by others to secure regulatory decisions from MLC/IDBs
- Bribery by others to secure operational benefits from MLC/IDBs
- Bribery by MLC/IDB employees or MLC Board/IDB members of others to influence an advantage

**Control Measures**

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

**Gifts, Hospitality and/or Donations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Procedure**

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

**Dealing with Bribery**

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

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

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

# Needham & Laddus IDB

*Administered by:*

middle level commissioners

## Governance
## Financial Regulations 2025 – 2035

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

**A SUMMARY**

1. These Financial Regulations should be read in conjunction with the Board's, Standing Orders, Regulations as to proceedings, Schedule of Reserved Matters and Scheme of Delegations to ensure that its resources are properly managed, accounted for and controlled.

2. The level at which decisions relating to the finances and functions of the Board are to be taken are as set out in the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations

3. The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining adequate and effective controls and procedures in the manner and format he/she considers to be best and shall where appropriate, prepare additional rules of procedure or guidance, supplementary to these Regulations.

4. The Clerk shall be responsible for setting up and maintaining the financial and management accounting/reporting systems, processes, procedures and coding lists. Such systems shall be properly documented and shall not be changed without the approval of the Clerk. The Head of Finance (Treasurer) to the Middle Level Commissioners shall be the Board's Responsible Financial Officer, as defined in and for the purposes of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The MLC finance team will support the Head of Finance in providing this function.

5. The Clerk shall advise the Board and carry out the Boards instructions in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and for ensuring that value for money is provided.

6. The Clerk shall ensure that the Board's Financial Statements for each Financial Year ending 31 March are prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities and, so far as may be appropriate, the Practitioners' Guide to the Preparation of Financial Statements for IDBs (and any subsequent requirements) applicable at the time of preparation.

7. The Clerk shall ensure that the Board considers and approves its Financial Statements for a Financial Year in accordance with the provisions of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

8. All employees and members have a responsibility for health and safety, compliance with policies and legislation, procedures and codes of practice, for the general security of the Board's property, and, for economy efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

9. All members and employees shall familiarise themselves with and observe the Schedule of Reserved Matters, the Scheme of Delegations and these Regulations.

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

**B SCHEME OF BUDGET DELEGATION**

1. The Clerk shall be a budget holder and is responsible to the Board for the overall management of the Board's Finances, the Expenditure Estimates and all Budgets.

2. The Board's Consulting Engineer is responsible to the Board to the extent that he/she is so authorised by the Board and is allocated funds for the purpose of preparing and managing the Board's Capital Works Budget.

3. The Board's Consulting Engineer and/or the Chairman and/or the District Officer are responsible to the Board to the extent that they are so authorised by the Board and are allocated funds for the purpose of preparing and managing where applicable the Board's Maintenance Works Budget, the Plant/Labour Operating Accounts, the Plant Renewals Budget, the Stock Control Account and the Rechargeable Works Budget and any other matter in respect of which they are authorised under the Scheme of Delegations.

4. Other than as set out in the Scheme of Delegations or where authorised to do so by a resolution of the Board, no other person shall be empowered to enter contracts on behalf of the Board unless authorised to do so by a budget holder. Nor shall any other person commit the Board to a particular course of action or provide an undertaking or assurance to any third party without the prior consent of the Clerk and/or Responsible Finance Officer and/or the Chairman.

5. No budget holder other than the Chairman shall procure goods and services, charge, allocate or otherwise commit expenditure against a budget that they have no budgetary responsibility for.

**C MANAGING BUDGETS & REPORTING**

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for preparing the Board's Estimates/Budgets, for monitoring income and expenditure during the course of the year, for alerting the Chairman to any material variances, and, for providing budget holders with the financial information that they require and assisting them as necessary to enable them to properly prepare/manage their budgets. The Clerk shall further ensure that the Board are presented with and consider the proposed expenditure estimates in order that the Rates and Special Levies can be determined for each financial year in due time in accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991 and it is the individual budget holder's responsibility to provide him/her with their detailed budgets and supporting information in order that this may be done.

2. Any drainage rate refunds due for whatever reason shall be approved by the Clerk prior to being paid or otherwise accounted for.

3. All correcting journal entries shall always be authorised and approved by the Clerk.

4. The Clerk shall ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for alerting the Chairman immediately should a Local Authority fail to make their Special Levy payment at the agreed time, or where Drainage Rates are outstanding following reminder. The Clerk and Chairman will agree a course of action and whether a special meeting of the Board is required.

5. Every budget holder is responsible for seeking to ensure that actual expenditure on each of their budgets does not exceed the budget as approved and shall regularly monitor income/expenditure to this end. Budget holders shall, whenever practicable, get approval for material adverse variances to any of their budgets that are anticipated. Approval shall be sought in accordance with the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations.

6. The Clerk may convene a meeting of the Board or a Committee. The Chairman or any 3 other Board members shall also have the power to convene such a meeting.

7. The Consulting Engineer shall prepare a Report for each Board meeting at which such items appear on the agenda detailing amongst other things the progress made on approved capital schemes in respect of which he/she has been instructed during the reporting period as compared to approved budgeted costs, and, when appropriate, will propose new capital schemes for consideration. Such Report will also detail any maintenance work which he/she has organised for the Board during the reporting period and the cost of such work.

8. The Clerk shall also prepare Financial Report(s) for each Board meeting and, shall prepare any other management accounting/financial report that may be required by the Board.

9. In considering its financial health, estimates, rates and investment strategy, the Board will consider as a minimum:
    I. Whether it has sufficient General Fund Reserves to cater for above average annual expenditure due to, for example, excessive pumping or urgent works.
    II. Whether it is utilising and planning for use of any Development Charges account appropriately for future capital works.
    III. Whether it has sufficient Asset Improvement/Future Works budget taking account of its asset base, asset age/reliability, capital programme requirements and likely grant eligibility.
    IV. Its financial ability to secure and pay off a suitable value Public Works Loan to bridge any gap between its Asset Improvement/Future Works budget and likely value of works.

## D PURCHASING GOODS & SERVICES (INCLUDING PLANT)

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

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

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

2. The budget holder shall be responsible for ensuring that quotations or tenders are sought when required by the above table. Where it is not possible to get the required quotations or tenders, the Chairman’s written approval must be obtained prior to awarding any contract.

3. Any agreed contractors, consultants or suppliers list shall be maintained and kept up to date by the Clerk.

4. A budget holder must never agree to permit a third party to provide them with goods/services where tenders or quotations are required without obtaining a copy of their terms of business beforehand.

5. Budget holders shall fully comply with all Competition Law, the Bribery Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and shall so far as is reasonable, satisfy themselves as to the insurance policies of contractors, and their systems of work before awarding works contracts.

6. Budget holders shall not enter into any contract that has been reserved to the Board or delegated to a Board Committee without obtaining the Clerk's approval beforehand. The Clerk shall not permit any budget holder to enter in to such a contract if he/she considers it to be inappropriate or that the required approval has not been given.

7. The relevant budget holder is responsible for ensuring that the procurement of all goods and services is authorised by the Board or in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations. All emergency work must be approved by the Chairman.

8. All procurement of goods and services shall be authorised by the signing and dating of an official purchase order or purchase instruction. On so authorising the procurement of goods or services the budget holder will have satisfied themselves that the Financial Regulations have been complied with and that any approval required by the Schedule of Reserved Matters and the Scheme of Delegations has been obtained. The Clerk shall be authorised to raise, sign and date a purchase order or purchase instruction where the procurement has been authorised by resolution of the Board.

9. The budget holder must never break down a job and string a number of purchase orders or authorisations together simply to avoid having to get 3 written quotations/tenders.

10. The following information must be clearly stated on each purchase order or instruction:

    i. The name of the supplier.
    ii. The agreed price of the goods/services required, other than in an emergency or where impractical to do so.
    iii. The Unique Order No as approved by the budget holder.

11. The Clerk shall ensure that procedures are in place for establishing when goods or services, have been charged, allocated or otherwise expenditure has been committed against an unauthorised budget.

12. All quotes/tenders, delivery notes, invoices for payment and credit notes shall be matched to the official purchase order or instruction, examined and coded before they are proposed for payment or set off. If the budget holder or the Clerk deems any invoice/credit note to be incorrect they shall not process such invoices/credit notes for payment or set off until satisfied that payment or set off is properly due. The quotes/tenders, purchase orders and delivery notes where required to be signed or where amended, shall all be filed together with the invoices/credit notes as otherwise directed by the Clerk

13. The Clerk shall ensure that all Invoices which have been approved for payment are duly scheduled for payment.

14. All Invoices shall be authorised by the Chairman and checked by the Clerk prior to making payment.

15. Where it is considered that there are valid reasons for departing from these procedures the approval of the Chairman shall be obtained. Any such departure shall be reported to the Board.

**E BANK MANDATE AND INVESTMENTS**

1. No changes shall be made to the Board's bankers or the bank mandate without the prior consent of the Board.

2. Approved signatories for the Board's bank accounts are as follows:

    1. The Chairman
    2. Such other member(s) as shall from time to time be authorised by the Board
    3. Such officers of the Middle Level Commissioners as shall from time to time be authorised by the Board

3. All cheque books, deposit books, banking cards, online access and other documentation or materials relating to the Board's bank accounts shall be retained in the custody of the Clerk.

4. All payments, bank transfers and Investments shall be made in the most efficient/secure manner as determined from time to time by the Clerk

5. The Clerk shall maintain Contact Details relating to financial transactions. All bank accounts shall be reconciled monthly and checked at regular intervals by separate officers of the Clerk.

**F INVESTMENTS AND BORROWINGS STRATEGY**

1. All investments made by the Board are made within guidance received from CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants) Guidance for the Public Sector, and relevant legislation:

   - The Board’s investment activities are limited by statute
   - The Board may invest with major Banks and/or Building Societies
   - The Board’s investments are to be regarded as low/medium risk
   - The Board’s investments must be made in the name of the Board and not any named individual

2. All investments shall be negotiated by the Clerk and reported to the Board. They must be for an appropriate period.

3. All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Board and shall be from the Public Works Loans Board. In an emergency there may be an exception.

4. No borrowings shall be taken out without a resolution of the Board.

5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the Clerk.

**G COLLECTING MONEY**

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies received are properly recorded in the accounting records.

2. Electronic copies of all receipts issued shall be retained for at least six years.

3. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the Drainage Rates and Special Levies are substantially collected by **1 November** each year. Outstanding Rates/Levies shall be pursued in a timely manner after that date.

4. The Clerk shall ensure that procedures are in place for all debts to be substantially collected within 30 days from the Debtor Invoice tax point date and for when a debt becomes 3 months overdue or whenever a debt becomes doubtful or is disputed.

**H FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

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

**I SUNDRY DEBTORS**

1. Each budget holder shall be responsible for providing the Clerk with the necessary information to enable rechargeable work to be properly accounted for and invoiced, and, any other debts due to be properly invoiced. The budget holder shall advise the Clerk whenever an Invoice is to be raised for goods provided or services rendered, under their control.
2. The Clerk shall ensure that all such Invoices are properly raised as soon as practicable after being authorised.
3. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that all other debts due to the Board are properly raised when required and collected appropriately.

4. The Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the Board consider whether any rents payable to them should be reviewed by a Chartered Surveyor at least once every 5 years.

5. The Clerk shall calculate any claims for Highland Water payments from the Environment Agency and send such claims to the Agency by the dates specified by the Agency.

6. Any refunds due to debtors for whatever reason shall be approved by the Clerk prior to being paid or otherwise accounted for.

8. The Clerk shall be empowered to collect all sundry debts due.

9 The Clerk shall obtain the Chairmans approval for instigating legal proceedings to collect outstanding amounts in excess of the County Court Small Claims limit.

**J EMPLOYING/MANAGING STAFF**

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

2. The Board’s approval shall be required for the employment of additional permanent staff.

3. The Chairman shall have the authority to employ temporary staff and replace permanent staff provided the employment costs are contained within the Expenditure Estimates/Budgets approved by the Board.

4 Subject to the above paragraphs and to the terms of any employee's contract, Board members shall not individually have the power to formally offer anyone any form of employment or to dismiss a Board employee, or otherwise take disciplinary action against any of the Board’s employees unless the Board has specifically authorised such action by resolution.

5. Board members other than the Chairman and the District Officer shall not individually give instructions to any of the Board’s employees, unless delegation has been approved by the Board.

6. The Chairman and the District Officer shall be responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of employees and for determining the nature and extent of these activities.

**K ASSET ACCOUNTING/MANAGEMENT**

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

## L AUDIT

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

## M SALARIES AND WAGES

1. The Board shall, where appropriate, seek independent advice before making significant changes to terms and conditions of employment and, save where such changes are as a result of legislative change, no changes shall be made to terms and conditions of employment (deliberately or otherwise) without the prior consent of the Board.

2. The Clerk shall be responsible for the proper compilation of the payroll(s) and for the final determination of pay, as approved by the Board.

3. All annual holiday entitlements (including any carried forward provisions) shall be agreed with the Chairman and/or the District Officer at the beginning of every financial year and signed off by him/her as such, in accordance with the Board's terms and conditions of employment.

4. All time-off in lieu, sick leave, working-from-home arrangements and other absences from work or the work place shall be approved in writing by the Chairman and/or the District Officer.

5. All proposed payments of salaries and wages shall be authorised by the Clerk prior to being made.

## N INSURANCES

1. The Clerk shall be responsible for expeditiously submitting all insurance claims that the Board agrees should be pursued. The Board shall be responsible for providing the Clerk with all of the necessary information he/she deems necessary in order to successfully make an insurance claim.

2. The Chairman and/or the District Officer shall immediately notify the Clerk of any loss, liability or damage or any event likely to lead to a claim on any of the Board's insurance policies and shall, where appropriate, notify the police of the relevant circumstances.

## O SECURITY

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

## P REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. The Board and Clerk reserves the right to make reasonable changes to these Regulations at any time in future.

2. Failure to take action against any employee or Member following a breach of the Financial Regulations does not constitute a waiver of the Board's right to take disciplinary action on any future breaches of the Financial Regulations and no single or partial action taken shall prevent any further disciplinary action being taken or other action being taken against any employee or Member.

**Appendix 4**

# Needham and Laddus Internal Drainage Board

*Administered by:*

middle level commissioners

## Governance

## Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management

**1 Issued**

1.1 This policy is issued and has been adopted by the Needham and Laddus Internal Drainage Board.

1.2 The policy was last reviewed and republished in April 2025 and will be reviewed at least every five years.

**2 Introduction**

**Purpose**

2.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Needham and Laddus 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 Needham and Laddus 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 Needham and Laddus 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 mor 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 viable[1].

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: 1577 ha
- Catchment area draining to and including the District: 1577 ha
- Area of Agricultural Land: 1484 ha
- Area of other (non-agricultural) land: 93 ha

5.4 Assets for which the Board have operational responsibility:

- Water Level Control Structures: 5 No
- Watercourses (maintained): 29 km
- Raised embankments: 0 km
- Reservoirs: 0 ha
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS): 0 no
- Pumping Stations: 0 no

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

- Main Rivers: 0 km
- Raised embankments/flood walls: 0 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 becomes 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.

**Appendix 5**

Internal drainage boards in England

# Annual Report for the year ended

31 March 2024

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

**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 £.

| NEEDHAM & LADDUS 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. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL | 4,416 |
| 2. KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL | 27,163 |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |
| 7. | |
| 8. | |
| **Total** | 31,579 |

## 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 | | 22,157 |
| B. Special Levies | | 30,234 |
| C. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency | | |
| D. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries | | 340 |
| E. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions) | | |
| F. PSCAs overall total<br><br>Breakdown:<br>from EA<br>from other RMAs | | |
| G. Loans | | |
| H. Rechargeable Works | | |
| I. Interest and Investment Income | | 921 |
| J. Rents and Acknowledgements | | |
| K. Other Income<br>Write back of provisions<br>Consents | | <br>44<br>100 |
| | | |
| **Total income** | | **53,796** |
| **EXPENDITURE** | | |
| L. New Works and Improvement Works | | (521) |
| M. Total precept to the Environment Agency | | 6,790 |
| N. Watercourse maintenance | | 31,564 |
| O. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures | | |
| P. Administration | | 10,522 |
| Q. PSCAs | | |

[1] https://saaa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PractitionersGuide 2023.pdf

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| R. Rechargeable Works | | |
| S. Finance Charges | | |
| T. Biodiversity enhancement and conservation – overall total<br><br>Breakdown:<br>General, across the whole region<br>SSSI specific, where relevant | <br><br><br>493 | 493 |
| U. Other Expenditure<br>Insurance | | 189 |
| Electricity costs – overall total<br><br>Breakdown (if possible):<br>Standing charge (per annum)<br>Unit charge (per annum) | | |
| Fuel (petrol and diesel costs) – overall total<br><br>Breakdown:<br>Pumping stations<br>Fleet and plant machinery | | |
| | | |
| **Total expenditure** | | **49,037** |
| **EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS** | | |
| V. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets | | |
| **Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year** | | **4,759** |
| W. Developers Funds income not applied in year | | 43,379 |
| X. Grant income not applied in year | | 6,338 |

Value of drainage rates outstanding at year end?

| |
|---|
| 1.715 % |
| £ 377.64 |

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)?................................ 16/04/2024

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? 0

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?

29.3 kilometres

29. How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

0 pumping stations

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 | |

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 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? | 18 |
| 60. Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991. | 13 |
| 61. Number of elected members on the board at year end. | 12 |
| 62. Number of appointed members on the board at year end. | 5 |
| 63. Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year. | 9 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 64. Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year. | 2 |

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

**NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

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

| | |
|---|---|
| Signature | S Ablett |
| Date | 18/02/2025 |
| Name in BLOCK LETTERS | MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT |
| Designation | ASSISTANT TREASURER |
| Email address | sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk |

**Appendix 6**

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

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

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

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

and recorded as minute reference:

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

Chair

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Mrs Martin went through the Governance report and the various Resolutions that the Board had been asked to make.

RESOLVED

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

The Board noted the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor

Review of Internal Controls

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

RESOLVED

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

Approval of authorised officers for operational/regulatory roles

RESOLVED

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

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

Responsible Finance Officer

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

RESOLVED

The Board considered and approved the recommendations that:

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

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

viii) That the 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.

ix) 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.

x) 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.

Policy Reviews

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

RESOLVED

That the update and re-publication of the Complaints Procedure and Privacy Policy is approved.

That the Board reviewed and approved the publication of an Anti-Bribery policy, and the Financial Regulations policy.

That the Board reviewed and approved the publication of the Boards Policy Statement.

That the MLC Lead Clerk, currently Ruth Martin, acts as the Board's Data Protection Officer and acknowledges that this role will be associated within the incumbent employee role of MLC Lead Clerk.

DEFRA IDB1 Return

Mrs Martin referred to the completed IDB1 form for 2023/2024 which the Board noted and approved.

Annual Governance Statement

The Board approved that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

Risk Management Strategy

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within the Board's Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website), noted the system of financial Internal Controls (as published on website) and did not highlight the requirement for any additional controls.

Exercise of Public Rights

Mrs Martin referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

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

RESOLVED

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

Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Mrs Martin reported that, as resolved at a previous meeting, the Board will continue with a limited assurance review and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

RESOLVED

> To continue with a limited assurance review as has been carried out in previous years.

B.433 Finance Report – Looking Back
Viz:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **12** |
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD** | **Subject:** | **FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider and approve the payments detailed within Appendix 2.
B. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/2025 within Appendix 3.

**Finance officer's review and key messages**

For 2024/2025 the Board set a rate of 9.00p to raise a total of £53,316 in agricultural drainage rates and special levies. The rate setting process was centred around standard provisions for routine maintenance.
The estimates against which the rate income was raised included the sum of £12,000 for future works. Routine drain maintenance works carried out in the year was less than budget estimates. This has given an overall underspend against budgeted expenditure of approximately £8,500 and this has been transferred to the future works account.
Over-all this gives an increase in the Future Works Fund of approximately £20,500 in the year and the total fund balances is £44,706 and is reflected in the Financial Statements and Annual Return which they are requested to review and approve.

**1. Budgeting**

1.1 The budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2025.

**2. Payments for 2024**

2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 1

**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 2

**Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**
**Role: Responsible Officer/Assistant Treasurer**

**Appendix 1 Payments for 2024**
**Appendix 2 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/25**

**Appendix 1**

# NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

| | |
|---|---|
| M E Fenn - District Officer's fee for 2023/2024 | 1,874.95 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and travelling | 5,615.76 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety re-charge 2023-2024 | 204.00 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Land searches for property (Account from Land Registry) | 21.00 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Supply deep water warning signage | 12.67 |
| Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2023/2024, planning and development applications) | 2,727.30 |
| Environment Agency - Precept | 3,496.64 |
| Crown Lodge Hotel - Expenses in connection with Board meeting | 144.80 |
| Association of Drainage Authorities - Annual subscription 2024 | 763.20 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting and Partners 2023/2024) | 618.00 |
| PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2023-2024 accounts) | 378.00 |
| Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications) | 930.60 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges | 5,093.05 |
| Environment Agency - Precept | 3,496.63 |
| Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Planning and development applications) | 1,241.78 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances | 749.53 |
| Harrison Agricultural Contracting Ltd - Flailmowing and drain maintenance | 10,194.00 |
| Mr M Green - Rates refund | 9.80 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Conservation Officer) | 775.75 |
| Middle Level Commissioners - Chemical weed control of District drains. | 1,106.71 |
| Information Commissioner - Data Protection Registration renewal | 52.00 |
| Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Planning and development applications) | 174.90 |
| Middle Level Commissioners towards retirement gift | 100.00 |
| Harrison Agricultural Contracting Ltd - Flailmowing | 409.50 |
| M E Fenn - District Officer's fee for 2024/2025 | 2,016.00 |
| | 42,206.57 |

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

**Appendix 2**

**NEEDHAM AND LADDUS 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 | 51,685.76 |
| | Precept | | 6,993.27 | 2024 | | |
| | Insurances | 749.53 | | Mar-31 | Rate Income & Special levies | 54,390.20 |
| | Contractors charges | 2,016.00 | | | Interest on Deposit Accounts | 852.45 |
| | Drainworks | 14,469.83 | | | Development Charges Account | 1,683.00 |
| | Administration charge, Audit fee, | | | | Consents | 350.00 |
| | Printing, Stationery, Advertising etc | 10,970.55 | 28,205.91 | | | |
| | Future Works Fund: | | | | | |
| | Rates Raised 2024/2025 | 12,000.00 | 12,000.00 | | | |
| | Improvement works: | | | | | |
| | To Restore Grant in Aid against credit for fees | | | | | |
| | Balance carried forward | | 61,762.23 | | | |
| | | | 108,961.41 | | | 108,961.41 |

## BALANCE SHEET

Revenue Section

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liabilities | | | Assets | | | |
| | General Fund | 61,762.23 | | Ratepayers - Arrears | | 2,649.22 |
| | Development Charges Account | 31,985.24 | | Value added Tax - Refunds due | | 1,483.73 |
| | Commutation Fund | | | Sundry Debtors | | 200.00 |
| | (Rookery Farm Drain) | 10,426.28 | | Balance in hand:- | | |
| | Future Works Fund | 36,605.66 | | Barclays Current Account | 20,000.00 | |
| | Sundry Creditors | 13,682.80 | | Barclays Business Premium Accc | 135,470.97 | |
| | Grant-in-Aid - Creditor | 6,337.87 | | National Savings Account | 996.16 | 156,467.13 |
| | | 160,800.08 | | | | 160,800.08 |

**Needham & Laddus Internal Drainage Board**

**Treasurers Account 2024/2025**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st April 2024 | | | 31st March 2025 | |
| Balance brought forward | | 136,676.58 | Payments made during the year | 42,206.57 |
| 31st March 2025 | | | | |
| Receipts during the year | | | | |
| Clerk's collection account | 59,043.72 | | | |
| Interest on deposit accounts | 1,957.24 | 61,000.96 | Balance carried forward | 155,470.97 |
| | | **197,677.54** | | **197,677.54** |

**National Savings Account 2024/2025**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st April 2024 | | 31st March 2025 | |
| Balance brought forward | 986.27 | Payments made during the year | 0.00 |
| 31st March 2025 | | | |
| Interest on deposit accounts | 9.89 | Balance carried forward | 996.16 |
| | **996.16** | | **996.16** |

**Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2025**

**Barclays Bank PLc**

Current Account

| | |
|---|---|
| Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2025 | 20,000.00 |
| Less unpresented cheques | 0.00 |
| Add outstanding lodgements | 0.00 |
| Balance per Trial Balance | **20,000.00** |

**Cash balances as at 31st March 2025**

**Barclays Bank PLc**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Current Account | **20,000.00** | |
| Business Premium Account | **135,470.97** | |
| | | **155,470.97** |

**National Savings**

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment Account per passbook | **996.16** |
| **Total reconciled cash balances per accounts** | **156,467.13** |

**Needham & Laddus 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 | 51,685.76 | | |
| | Development charges account | 33,121.96 | | |
| | Commutation fund | 10,257.11 | | |
| | Future works account | 24,206.43 | | |
| | | | **119,271.26** | **119,271** |
| **Line 2** | **Rates and Special Levies** | | | |
| | Agricultural rates | 22,625.82 | | |
| | Contribution Needham Bank | 146.00 | | |
| | Special Levies | 31,579.00 | | |
| | Penalty | 0.00 | | |
| | Costs | 75.00 | | |
| | Write-off | -35.62 | | |
| | | | **54,390.20** | **54,390** |
| **Line 3** | **Total other receipts** | | | |
| | Interest | | | |
| | General fund | 852.45 | | |
| | Development charges account | 546.28 | | |
| | Commutation fund | 169.17 | | |
| | Future works fund | 399.23 | | |
| | Grant in Aid | 0.00 | | |
| | Consents | 350.00 | | |
| | Discharge contributions | 0.00 | | |
| | Write back of provisions | 0.00 | | |
| | | | **2,317.13** | **2,317** |
| **Line 4** | **Staff costs** | | | |
| | Wages/salaries | 0.00 | | |
| | National insurance contributions | 0.00 | | |
| | Pension costs | 0.00 | | |
| | Travelling expenses | 0.00 | | |
| | | | **0.00** | **0** |
| **Line 5** | **Loan repayments** | | | |
| | PWLB - Principal | 0.00 | | |
| | PWLB - Interest | 0.00 | | |
| | | | **0.00** | **0** |

**Needham & Laddus IDB**
**Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return**

**Financial year ended 31st March 2025**

| | | | | Per Annual Return |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Line 6** | **All other payments** | | | |
| | Precept | 6,993.27 | | |
| | Rates, insurances, telephones | 749.53 | | |
| | Drainworks | 14,469.83 | | |
| | Contractors charges | 2,016.00 | | |
| | Administration | 10,970.55 | | |
| | Improvement Works | 0.00 | | |
| | | | **35,199.18** | **35,199** |
| **Line 7** | **Balances carried forward** | | | |
| | General Fund | 61,762.23 | | |
| | Development charges account | 31,985.24 | | |
| | Commutation fund | 10,426.28 | | |
| | Future works fund | 36,605.66 | | |
| | | | **140,779.41** | **140,779** |

Reconciliation
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6 140,779.41

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

| | Year ending | | Notes and guidance |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 31 March 2024 £ | 31 March 2025 £ | *Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.* |
| 1. Balances brought forward | 114,512 | 119,271 | *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 | 52,391 | 54,390 | *Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.* |
| 3. (+) Total other receipts | 1,404 | 2,317 | *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 | 49,036 | 35,199 | *Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).* |
| 7. (=) Balances carried forward | 119,271 | 140,779 | *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 | 137,663 | 156,467 | *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 | 0 | 0 | *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**

AL Wool

Date 03/04/2025

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

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Finance Officer, and the payments detailed for 2024,

Annual Accounts and Finance Papers 2024/2025

The Board considered and approved the Annual accounts and Finance Papers for the year ended 31st March 2025, as required in the Audit regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Return, on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

B.434 Finance Report – Looking Forward
Viz:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **13** |
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD** | **Subject:** | **FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider the Finance Officer's summary
B. Fees, remuneration and subscriptions
C. Review & approve Determination of land for rating purposes, Rate arrears & Contributions from Developers (Confidential papers)
D. Note the Precept to the Environment Agency
E. Review & Approve Rating Estimates for 2025/2026
F. Consider & approve the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2025/2026

**Finance Officer's summary and key messages**

The rating estimates for 2025/2026 are made up of standard budget provisions and the engineers estimate for drain maintenance works for the coming year.
The engineers estimate for drain maintenance works in 2025/2026 are £19,925, an increase of £300 on the previous year's estimate.
These estimates do not contain further provision for additional works concerning the culvert replacement scheme, please see the engineer's comments concerning this in relation to the retention being held and the capital programme, which should be taken-into-account when considering the rate requirement. The estimated expenditure gives a rate requirement for 2025/2026 of 9.50p.

**1. Fees, Renumerations and Subscriptions**

1.1 Subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) will increase by 6.5%, from £636 to £678 for 2025.

**2. Precept to the Environment Agency**

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

2.2 The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2025.

The precept for 2024 was £6,993.27.

**3. Determination of Land Values for Rating & Rate Arrears (Confidential Papers).**

3.1 The confidential papers enclosed detail land that has changed from being rateable to being included within the special levy calculations. The papers include details of any Rate arrears.

**4. Estimates for 2025/26**

4.1 The estimated budget for 2025/26 is shown in Appendix 1.

4.2 Standard budget provisions have been made, retaining the drain work budget for a normal years' work.

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

4.4 Administration charges has been uplifted by a 5% inflationary increase on 2024/25, also a 6.5% increase in ADA subscription.

4.5 These budget provisions indicate a rate requirement for 2025/2026 of 9.50p, the rate set for 2024/2025 being 9.00p.

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

**5. Rate Requirements for 2025/26**

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

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

**Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**
**Role: Responsible Officer/Assistant Treasurer**

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

**Appendix 1 Estimates for 2025/26**
**Appendix 2 Rate Requirements for 2025/26**

**APPENDIX 1**

**NEEDHAM AND LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**
**BUDGET 2025/2026**

| | | Approved budget 2024/2025 £ | Forecast to 31/03/2025 £ | Proposed Budget 2025/2026 £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Insurances | 225 | 750 | 790 |
| 2 | Repairs and renewals | 100 | 0 | 100 |
| 3 | District Officer's fee | 1,975 | 1,975 | 2,075 |
| 4 | Drainworks (including Environmental measures) | 23,250 | 12,990 [A] | 25,782 [B] |
| 5 | Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc | 10,850 | 10,973 | 12,000 |
| 6 | Environment Agency Precept | 6,993 | 6,993 | 6,993 |
| 7 | Future works funding | 12,000 [c] | 12,000 | 12,000 [c] |
| 8 | Improvement works | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 55,393 | 45,681 | 59,740 |
| | LESS Deposit Accounts interest | 2,077 | 889 | 2,350 |
| | | 53,316 | 44,792 | 57,390 |

**Remarks**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A - | Flail mowing/weed bucket/spraying | 8,495 |
| | Weed Control | 922 |
| | Contribution - Env. Officer | 776 |
| | Drainworks/Planning fees/misc | 1,810 |
| | | 12,003 |
| B - | Slubbing (Including Emergency) | 10,625 |
| | Flail Mowing | 7,000 |
| | Weed Control | 800 |
| | Contribution - Env. Officer | 2,375 |
| | Drainworks/Planning fees/misc | 4,982 |
| | | 25,782 |
| C - | Provision for Future works programme | |

**Appendix 2**

Needham and Laddus Internal Drainage Board

Rate and levy requirements

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

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 41.71%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levies issued to Councils:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Borough of Kings Lynn & Norfolk – | 50.15% |
| Fenland District Council – | 8.14% |
| | 58.29% |

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £2,513.

In 2025/2026 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levies and contributions would raise £6,038

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Revenue balance in hand on 31st March 2025 - £51,686

The estimated net expenditure of £57,390 in 2025/2026 is equivalent to:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 9.50p

b) a Special levy on the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk of £28,705 and

c) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £4,661

d) contributions from Hundred of Wisbech IDB of £154

In 2024/2025 an equivalent rate of 9.00p in the £ was raised together with a Special levy of £4,333 on Fenland District Council and £26,650 on the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, and contributions from Hundred of Wisbech IDB of £143.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Board

April 2025

Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions :

a) District Officer's Fee

The Board gave consideration to the District Officer's fee for 2025-2026. Mr J Fenn reported that Mr M Fenn had advised that he would be happy to continue as District Officer for the next 12 months. The Board agreed to increase the District Officers fees for 2025-2026.

RESOLVED

That the Board agree that up to £2,100 be allowed for the District Officers fee for 2025/2026.

b) ADA subscription

Mrs Martin reported that ADA increased subscriptions by 6.5% for 2025, from £636 to £ 678. The Chair commented that membership of ADA is important and suggested that the Board accept the increase.

RESOLVED

That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2025 be paid.

That the Clerk be authorised to obtain a ticket for the Annual Conference of the Association for any Member who wishes to attend.

c) Precept

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

The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2025.

The precept for 2024 was £6,993.27.

RESOLVED

That the Precept is paid in full unless a decision to appeal against the Precept is made.

d) Determination of Annual Values for Rating purposes.

The Board considered the recommendation for the determination of annual value for rating purposes.

RESOLVED

i) That the determination recommended be adopted by the Board
ii) That the Clerk be empowered to serve notices and to take such other action as may be necessary to comply with statutory requirements.
iii) That the Chairman and the Clerk be empowered to authorise appropriate action on behalf of the Board in connection with any appeal against the determination.

e) Rate Arrears

RESOLVED

That the rate arrears amounting to £19.88 be written off.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2025/26.

The Board reviewed the proposed budget for 2025/2026.

Mr Crofts asked what the contribution received from the Hundred of Wisbech IDB related to. Mr Fenn explained that an area of land at the rear of The Stitch could not be drained into the Hundred of Wisbech IDB's system, and so it was agreed that this Board would accept the flow if a financial contribution was made. This agreement dates back many years.

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

As previously reported the budgets include the increase in drain works costs and also includes a £12,000 contribution to the Future Works Fund.

The Chair asked if there was any indication on the cost of replacement of the culvert at The Cottons, and Mr Lakey advised that a quotation of £135,000 had been received. The Chair advised he felt it important consider an increase in the rate in order to start building funds for the culvert replacement. Mr Fenn advised that resilience funding had previously been applied for but the project did not satisfy the criteria, with Mr Lakey advising that the works would have needed to have been completed by 31st March 2025.

The Chair advised the Board that a rate of 9.5p in the £ had been suggested by the budget forecast. Mr Crofts then formally proposed the rate with Mr Rose seconding the rate, and this was agreed unanimously by the Board.

Mr Fenn suggested that most Board would like to have a similar rate, and Mr Lakey advised the Board that their 'little and often' approach works well. He advised of a study a few years ago that calculated £1 spent 3 or 4 years ago would be giving £3.80's worth of value today. Mr Fenn said he thought the Board has been good with their open-minded approach to projects in the past and this has paid off.

The Chair asked that, with the 'Case for Change' document in mind along with the business decision already made by MLC to withdraw their consultancy services, if MLC would still be happy to support the Board if there is no amalgamation. Mr Fenn explained how the geographic and hydrological layout of the fens impacted on the decision to withdraw services.

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2025/2026. and were informed by Mrs Martin 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 41.71% and 58.29%.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £57,390 be raised by drainage rates and special levy and by way of a contribution from Hundred of Wisbech IDB.

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 and contribution from Hundred of Wisbech IDB are £23,869 and £33,367 and £154 respectively.

iv) That a rate of 9.50p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That Special Levies of £28,706 be made and issued to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and £4,661 be made and issued to the Fenland 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/levies 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.435 Middle Level IDB Change

Viz:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners | | **Item No:** | **14** |
| **Meeting:** | **NEEDHAM & LADDUS IDB** | **Subject:** | **MIDDLE LEVEL IDB CHANGE** |
| **Date:** | **Tuesday 15th April 2025** | **Officer Responsible:** | **Paul Burrows**<br>**On behalf of the working group** |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

A. Have an open and objective discussion about their health, their fitness for the future and their reliance and interdependency with the health of all other IDBs within the Middle Level and the Middle Level Commissioners.
B. Respond to the questions posed to inform the approach to detailed design.
C. Gauge the degree of support for taking control of change proactively locally.
D. Provide a £300 contribution towards the costs of developing the detailed design.

**1. Recap**

1.1 As previously reported to the MLC Board and IDBs administered by the MLC, on 15th February 2024 the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Board Members who sit on more than one IDB within the Middle Level (and those outside the catchment that we administer) had been invited to an informal session in Ramsey to share thoughts about the future IDB governance landscape within the Middle Level and whether action was needed to ensure this was resilient for the future. The consensus from those who attended was that we needed to act and a small working group has been identified to draft an initial case for change.

1.2 The working group met on 5th September 2024 and were joined by Innes Thomson, ADA Chief Executive. The group used the 'Geoff Beel' vision from 2009 as a starting point to discuss the primary drivers for change and the key concerns that any proposed new model would need to take account of. A summary note from the meeting was issued on 9th September 2024.

1.3 The Middle Level Board of the Middle Level Commissioners, recognising their leadership, convening and facilitating role, as well as their interest in the governance and operational health of IDBs within their catchment, approved £10k of seed funding used to commission an outline design report. Gradeas Consulting Limited was engaged to undertake this work.

1.4 The working group met on 16th January 2025 to review the draft report and agree the approach to crucial engagement with IDBs that is essential in moving forward with the work into a detailed design phase.

1.5 The outline design report has been made available to IDB Chairman and Board Members to be read in conjunction with this paper.

**2. Case for Change – Key Messages**

2.1 There are a variety of factors that contribute to the view that the current IDB governance model within the Middle Level is not sufficiently robust for future generations, with an increasing number of IDBs being in poor financial and membership health today.

a) Changes in agriculture and land-ownership, with fewer family farms reducing the scale of hands-on active IDB membership, along with a general aging demographic.

b) Degradation of pumping stations the majority of which are at the end of their reliable life, with insufficient funds and complex governance arrangements stifling proactive and efficient investment.

c) A steady increase in legislative and statutory responsibilities, along with increased societal and government expectations of IDBs meaning the resources and costs associated with these overheads have become a sizeable proportion of overall expenditure, particularly for smaller IDBs. This is set to increase further.

d) Increasing operational pressures as climate change accelerates and IDBs have to adapt to dealing with extremes of drought and high, intense rainfall, whilst being highly vulnerable to energy costs.

e) The inherent financial dependence upon eligibility, availability and leverage of government grant with responsible investment strategies being beyond the reach of many IDBs' rate and levy payer base.

2.2 Given the two-tier nature of water management within the Middle Level **we collectively are only as strong as the weakest link**, so whilst an IDB may be or may consider themselves relatively fit for the future, they ought to consider the landscape scale position.

2.3 Boards need to be mindful that the scale of change potentially needed in the Middle Level would be beyond the 'business as usual' IDB amalgamations that are ongoing or have happened in recent history and would therefore need significant resourcing to enact and implement. This would need to be programmed and resourced with the Environment Agency and Defra. Even with dedicated and bespoke drive, realistically any change we stimulate now would take a 5-15 year period to come to fruition. The problem ought not to be left to the next generation to fix.

2.4 The five key messages the working group would encourage the Board to consider are:

1. The need to **future-proof** – thinking about the next two generations of farmer, land manager and beneficiary.

2. The ambition to **retain local control** – the increasing risk of change being designed and directed nationally.

3. Our collective ability to inform and **influence** locally, regionally and nationally to strengthen our negotiating position to **lever investment** and policy change, as well as **deliver efficiently and effectively to avoid higher future costs**.

4. The **changing representation** within IDB membership given changes in land-use, development and water level management.

5. The need for a more **cost-effective delivery model** with overhead costs proportionate to expenditure.

**3. Outline Design – Questions for IDBs and individual Board Members**

3.1 The approach taken to the outline design has been an objective, analytical one driven by readily available date. Collectively we need to add the operational view and Middle Level knowledge to focus and scope the next stage of detailed design.

3.2 Having reviewed the draft outline design report the working group debated the outline options and despite a range of differing views, they suggest that:

a) The option of one or two IDBs is not progressed to detailed design as it was felt that this would create an entity that is too big and would arguably be as cumbersome to govern and service as the existing model. There is little appetite for becoming the largest IDB in the country.

b) Options for five or six IDBs are not developed, supporting the view and rationale presented within the report (Section 7).

c) Options for three and four IDBs are progressed to detailed design.

3.3 Alongside seeking the views of IDBs via this paper the working group suggested that an online form be made available for individual Board Members to also submit their views and that in parallel to this engagement we write to the following seeking their view and steer:

a) Local Authorities, including Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs)

b) Environment Agency

c) Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC)

d) Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)

e) Defra

3.4 Questions for IDBs to consider and feedback via the Chairman to the MLC Chief Executive by close on Friday 4th July 2025.

**Q1** **On a scale of 1-10, do you consider that there is a need for change?**
1 = don't see a need to change to 10 = radical reform is long overdue.

**Q2** **What are your hopes and fears for the future and within any new model?**

**Q3** **Do you consider that your IDB is fit for the future?**
Yes or No – Please explain your answer.

**Q4** **What are the current strengths of your IDB that you wish to see retained within any new model and what are the weaknesses you wish to see mitigated?**

**Q5** **Do you agree that the options of one, two, five and six IDBs are not progressed to detailed design?**
Yes or No – Please explain your rationale if you disagree.

**Q6** **Which options to you feel warrant progressing to detailed design, or have you an alternative suggestion?**

**Q7** **Do you have a preferred option from within the outline design options of three and four IDBs?** Yes or No **-** If yes, which option and explain why.

**Q8** **The report references a number of considerations that could be considered further within detailed design** *eg specific boundaries, differential rates, ringfencing accrued budgets, operational districts, employee and the service delivery model.* **Which of these is most important to you and why? Have you any specific issues or observations you would like to be assessed?**

**Q9** **Are you supportive of any change being designed and led locally and what role would you like to play within this?**

**Q10** **Have you any other feedback or issues that you feel have not been considered within the work so far?**

**4. Next steps and potential timescales**

4.1 The aim is for feedback to be consolidated over summer and reviewed by the working group in September 2025.

4.2 If human and financial resources are available and the feedback corroborates the need to act, the detailed design will then be scoped and commissioned with the ambition to present the results and seek IDB approval to a preferred option at their 2026 meetings.

**Author Name: Paul Burrows**
**Role:**
**Chief Executive, Middle Level Commissioners**

**Working group members:**
**Mick Mottram, Michael Dale, Emma Alterton, Sam Johnson, David Boyce, Jonathan Brown, Hugh Whittome, Marc Heading, Richard Price, Paul Burrows (plus other MLC staff inputs***)*

Mrs Martin referred to the Clerks Report relating the Middle Level IDB Change and advised that there have been several meetings of the Boards within the Middle Level with an initial meeting being held at Ramsey to ask for volunteers to join a steering group. A consultant has been engaged and an initial report written giving various scenarios for future Board amalgamations. There are many options explored including one large Middle Level Board, through to five or six smaller amalgamated Boards.

Mrs Martin reminded the Board that all should have received a digital copy of the report for them to read and consider, and that the Clerk is asking for feedback. The Board members were advised that they should respond to the questions via the Chairman by 4th July 2025 so that they have some time to think about the proposals and their answers.

Some discussions followed, with Mr Crofts raising his concern that the lack of knowledge should Boards continue to change is not being considered, and that it is detrimental to the Board for them to be controlled by engineers and officers and less from landowners and farmers. He felt that bigger Boards would result in more full-time officials. The Chair thought that this would mean that Boards would need to be arranged differently but Mr Crofts still felt that local detail may be lost due to this.

The Chair responded that Boards rely on having people around the table and Mr Fenn added that it depended on landowners taking part. Subsequent discussion over landowners not wanting to engage with Boards followed, and it was acknowledged that Board members are volunteers, and they are being asked to be members of a local authority with the legal implications that this implies.

Mr Fenn suggested that the only similar Board to this one within the Middle Level catchment area is Churchfield and Plawfield IDB, and that an amalgamation with this Board seems like a natural fit. The Chair suggested that it could be prudent to start discussing this further and Mr Calton felt it was important to make a case for gravity boards to stick together.

Mrs Martin reminded the Board of the Clerks request for feedback and also asked the Board to consider providing a £300 contribution towards the cost of developing the detailed design. The Board agreed that the contribution be made.

RESOLVED

That a £300 contribution be made by the Board towards the cost of developing the detailed design.

B.436 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

That next Meeting of the Board be held on 14th April 2026 at 7pm at The Crown Lodge, Outwell.

B.437 Any Other Business

Mr Rose advised of the upcoming unitary authority and devolution proposals. The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk are going for the 3rd option which will create an east and west strategic council. There will be no council elections this year.

With no other items raised the meeting was closed at 8.35pm.

…………………………………………..
Chair

……………………………..
Date