

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Upwell Internal Drainage Board
hosted at the Lamb & Flag, Welney on Wednesday 4th June 2025

PRESENT

K Goodger (Chair)	G Gowler
P Clabon (Vice-Chair)	P Hartley
G Bliss	S Hartley
S Calton	A Kew
R Gladwin	A Quail
W Gladwin	J Quail
R Gott	C Rose

Miss Sam Ablett (representing the Clerk to the Board) and Mr Carl Nunn (District Foreman) were in attendance.

B.2158 Inspection of the District

a) Chestnut Avenue

Members inspected the headwall at the Old Croft River overspill at Chestnut Avenue, which was not operating correctly. Members were asked to consider whether a new water control structure should be installed to control the water levels, and this would be discussed at the meeting.

The Environmental Officer would need to undertake a survey to investigate whether any water voles were present in the location.

b) Upwell Fen Pumping Station

i) Members present inspected the discharge pipe thrust block and noted the damage. The Chairman reported that the Consulting Engineer had advised that a stock of clay should be kept on site in case an emergency repair was required. He added that he considered the Board should request the Consulting Engineer undertakes the necessary works to repair the pipe and that a stock of clay be held on site in the meantime. It was agreed this matter would be discussed further at the Board meeting.

Jonathan Quail offered to deliver clay to the pumping station.

ii) The Chairman referred to the Consulting Engineer's comments included in the January Board meeting papers in which he advised of the corrosion to weedscreen hoist drum, which would benefit from being recoated. The Chairman reported that at the last Board meeting Members had requested for a quote to be obtained Karl Gilbert Engineering and advised that this had not been done.

A contact number for Karl Gilbert Engineering was provided by Adrain Kew. Members requested that a quote be obtained, as was previously agreed, and Carl Nunn was asked to contact them.

c) Nordelph Pumping Station

Members inspected a gap at the end of the weedscreen and the possibility of debris entering and damaging the pump was highlighted. The District Foreman advised that when at the higher summer levels the pumps were not in operation and when they are he is in attendance and is able to remove any debris present. He added that the levels were lower in the winter, the attached bar would prevent debris from entering the chamber.

The flailmower was inspected and the District Foreman advised of two new hydraulic taps being required on the mower to stop oil seeping past the valves and hitting the cab. He advised that he was able to attend to this.

d) Cock Fen Pumping Station

Members noted the engine exhaust was corroding, which could damage the pumping station brickwork and considered this should be repaired.

The Chairman advised the control panel required replacing and it was hoped the Board would receive GiA funding for this.

The Chairman reported that the M & E Consulting Engineer considered that electrification of the pumping station was not the best option for the Board. He added that if the electrification of the pumping station did not proceed a refund from UK Power Networks would be received and the control panel purchased from Raands would be sold.

Members enquired whether the existing diesel engines were still available or whether they should be upgraded. The District Foreman advised they were still made in China and could be obtained from a UK supplier.

e) Bedlam Bridge

It was noted that the manhole cover over the sonars needed to be repaired as it had sunk and the pipes needed repainting. Members agreed the necessary repairs should be carried out and that this would be resolved at the Board meeting.

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J French, Mr R Means and Mr C Crofts

B.2159 Declarations of Interest

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

The Chairman and the Vice Chairman declared an interest in all matters relating to them both as District Officers.

The Chairman declared a financial interest concerning the charges for hire of plant when engaged on private work and Mr Roger Gladwin declared an interest as a Member of Euximoor IDB).

B.2160 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 22nd of January 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2161 Matters Arising

None

B.2162 Constitution & Membership

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	UPWELL IDB	Subject:	CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Polly Tombleson

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Note the current status of its membership and the role they each play as members serving the interests of the Board.
- B. Review attendance records and identify any resolutions as necessary.
- C. There is currently 1 vacancy
- D. Reinforce the need for members to view all five 'Good Governance' videos.
- E. Identify any topic areas for additional training, as well as any inspection/site visit requirements.

1. Current status

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

	Elected Members	Appointed Members	Total Members	Quorum
Composition	14	N/A		7
Actual	13	2 FDC, 3 KLWN	18	
Vacancies	1		0	

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

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary
1	H Bliss	Ratepayer	
2	S Calton	Nominee of ratepayer (Fred Hartley Estates Ltd)	
3	P Clabon	Ratepayer	Vice-Chair & District officer
4	R Gladwin	Ratepayer	
5	W Gladwin	Nominee of Ratepayer (Barry Scott)	
6	K Goodger	Ratepayer	Chair & District Officer
7	R Gott	Ratepayer	
8	G Gowler	Ratepayer	
9	P Hartley	Nominee of Ratepayer – (Frank Hartley & Sons)	
10	S Hartley	Nominee of Ratepayer – (Frank Hartley & Sons)	
11	A Kew	Nominee of Ratepayer - (Waldersey Farms Ltd)	
	R Means	Nominee of Ratepayer – (Rochester Farms Ltd)	Resigned 27/5/2025
12	A Quail	Ratepayer	
13	J Quail	Nominee of Ratepayer – (Scott Oldroyd & Co)	
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- 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	C Crofts	BCKLWN	Councillor
2	J French	FDC	Councillor
3	J Kirk	BCKLWN	Councillor
4	C Marks	FDC	Councillor
5	C Rose	BCKLWN	Councillor

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

2. Attendance

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

Elected Members

No	Name	22/1/2025	31/5/2024	18/1/2024	17/5/2023
1	G Bliss	Present	Present	Present	Attended
2	S Calton	Apologies	Present	Present	Apologies
3	P Clabon	Present	Present	Present	Attended
4	R Gladwin	Present	Apologies	Present	Attended
5	W Gladwin	Present	Apologies	N/A	N/A
6	K Goodger	Present	Present	Present	Attended
7	R Gott	Present	Apologies	Present	Apologies
8	G Gowler	Present	Present	Present	Attended
9	P Hartley	Present	Apologies	Present	Attended
10	S Hartley	Present	Apologies	Present	Attended
11	A Kew	Present	Apologies	Apologies	N/A
	R Means	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	Attended
12	A Quail	Present	Apologies	Present	Attended
13	J Quail	Present	Present	Present	Attended
14					

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/12/2024	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022
1	K Goodger	Apologies	Apologies		Attended

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	22/1/2025	31/05/2024	18/01/2024	17/5/2023
1	C Crofts (BCKLWN)	Apologies	Present	Apologies	Attended
2	J French (FDC)		Apologies		N/A
3	J Kirk (BCKLWN)	Present	Apologies	Present	Apologies
4	C Marks (FDC)	Apologies	Apologies	Present	N/A
5	C Rose (BCKLWN)		Present	Present	Attended

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

- 3.1 There is currently 1 vacancy on the board.

3.2 The next Election of the board will be in 2026

4. Composition and amalgamations

4.1 The Board is encouraged to continually monitor and review its membership, financial and climate resilience, along with assessing its influence locally, regionally and nationally. These are all factors that may lead the Board to consider changing its composition and/or amalgamation with (an)other Board(s).

4.2 Amalgamations and composition changes are not swift processes and can take a number of years. They require planning and additional/specialist resourcing by the MLC as your clerk, Environment Agency and Defra. Therefore, the Board is encouraged to think ahead five to ten years in its decision making, thinking about the next generation.

5. Training

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

5.2 To date 5 of 18 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 5 of 18 Board Members have reported viewing 2 of the 5 videos
To date 2 of 18 Board Members have reported viewing 3 of the 5 videos
To date 1 of 18 Board Members have reported viewing 4 of the 5 videos

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

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

Author Name: Polly Tombleson

Role: Senior Business Support Officer

Vacancies & appointments

Miss Ablett reported that Mr Roger Means had notified the office and had resigned as a Board member. She advised that this gave rise to a vacancy on the Board.

The Vice Chairman proposed that Mr Michael Fairey be asked to join the Board, which was seconded by Mr Bliss. Miss Ablett enquired whether there were any other proposals.

As there were no further proposals Members agreed to ask Mr Fairey to join the Board

RESOLVED

That a letter be sent to Mr Means thanking him for his services to the Board.

That a letter be sent to Michael Fairey inviting him to join the Board.

Training

Miss Ablett circulated a training matrix for each member, with the record of attendance and asked Members to complete it and advise the Middle Level office if any further training had been undertaken.

She added that it was important that the videos are viewed as the data must be reported to the EA and DEFRA each year as part of the IDB 1 return and she encouraged members to undertake the training so this could be reported.

Miss Ablett reported that ADA had now updated their Good Governance Guide for IDB Members and referred to the hard copy which she had distributed to Members. She added that it was anticipated that a training package would be developed and made available by ADA later in the year.

Amalgamations

Miss Ablett reminded members that at the last Board meeting it had been resolved that the Board did not wish to pursue amalgamation further, with Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners and enquired whether that was still the view of the Board.

Members agreed that this was still the case.

B.2163 Clerks Report

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	CLERK'S REPORT
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 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. 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.

2. 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.

3. Insurance

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

Covering MLC and our administered IDBs, the business combined policy premium has increased this year by £16,875, due to the significant increase in pumping station valuations following the meetings last year. The fleet policy premium has also increased considerably due to the both the number and size of claims during the year, together with there being additional vehicles and plant. We have been warned that AXA capped the increase in the fleet premium, but if this had gone out to tender would probably have been in the region of £110,000 plus 12% Insurance Premium Tax. This equates to an increase of £68,000.

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

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Miss Ablett referred to the Clerk's report and drew the Board's attention to other matters in the Clerk's report and there were no questions raised by Members.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

That the decision on whether to appeal the IDB Precept (under s40 of the Water Resources Act) be delegated to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman.

B.2164 Environment Officers Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	UPWELL IDB	Subject:	ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Sofi Lloyd

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

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

1) Environmental Services Package Update

Further to the update and discussion at the Middle Level IDB Chairs meeting in December 2024, you will have seen and heard us over the previous 12 months, setting out our plans and reasoning for focussing, updating and re-defining the range of services that we provide to IDBs across and beyond the Middle Level.

This will take time and the 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.

Background

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

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

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

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

Going forward

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

Environmental Services Package

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

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

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

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

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

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

Benefits of a service provided by MLC

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

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

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

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

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

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

We hope that this has provided you with sufficient information regarding the new service package from 1st April 2025. I appreciate that the step-change in fee may not be universally well received by Board Members that are less engaged and aware of their personal and collective environmental liabilities and risks. We will work on the premise that your Board will opt in and engage with the Environmental Service Package. Indeed, it's success and your compliance requires a two-way relationship and input.

You may choose to benchmark this package against other service providers and opt-out. If so, please feel free to use the information above to secure comparable quotes. 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hedgerow-management-rules-cutting-and-trimming)

3) Licensing of IDB works around badger setts.

Previously, MLC had planned to roll out training and licence administration services to enable all IDBs to access the CL27 Badger Licence and to conduct their routine and periodic maintenance work compliantly around badger setts. However there were some issues with licence returns in 2023 which highlighted some regional variation in the regulation and enforcement of CL27 licence requirements within Natural England, and some developing impractical licence requirements. MLC and representatives from 3 other IDBs made a successful legal challenge to Natural England regarding the issues and have secured some positive changes to the licence which are more enabling of our low-risk routine maintenance work taking place around

badger setts. This has removed the need for all IDBs to hold their own badger licences (although they may wish to do so anyway) and makes it much easier for MLC to continue to provide qualified and licenced supervision of works where necessary. Any work that carries any risk of damaging a badger sett or disturbing a badger within a sett, even if the risk is deemed to be small, is still licensable and MLC should be contacted for further advice where such works are planned. This includes desilting over or near to a badger sett. Where there is uncertainty, if any works are planned within 30m of a badger sett, please contact MLC for advice and guidance. Please see the updated CL27 licence on-line for full details of activities that are likely to be licensable: [Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes \(CL27\) - GOV.UK](#)

4) Improved advice and guidance provision:

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

5) Water Vole Displacement Myth Busting

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

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

Water Voles - Myth Busting

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

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

Miss Ablett referred to the Environment Officer's Report.

She advised It was imperative that all Board Members take note of the matters included in the report as this was an area that could have a significant impact on the Board and if the current legislation was not adhered to, it could lead to criminal proceedings and significant fines.

She referred Members to the Environmental Services package that had been developed to help the Board to meet their minimum statutory environmental compliance.

The Chairman reported that he had met with the Miss Abigail Leach, the ecologist, and had been extremely impressed. He added that she had been incredibly supportive of the Board and had advised that communication between the Boards and both herself and Sofi Lloyd was key. He advised that he has spoken to Miss Leach regarding the necessary environmental work, which would be required if and when the culverts included in the asset refurbishment plans were installed.

Members agreed to the Environmental Services package and the associated increased fee and the Vice Chairman advised that the Board must make use of this service.

Miss Ablett advised the new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), and policies were being drawn up for approval and enquired whether Members were happy for the drafts to be sent to the Chairman for his approval before being ratified at the next meeting of the Board.

Members agreed this was the best course of action.

The Chairman reported to members that the District Foreman would shortly be mapping badger setts within the District.

RESOLVED

That the Ecology and Environmental Services Manager's Report be approved.

That the draft Biodiversity Action Plan and policies are sent to the Chairman for his consideration and approval on behalf of the Board.

B.2165 Consulting Engineers Reports

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	7
Meeting:	UPWELL IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield
RECOMMENDATIONS The Board is asked to: A. Consider the development of a capital investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly. B. Review pumping station key dates and inform the Consulting Engineer of any discrepancies or additional information.			

1. Summary

The Chief Engineer is currently developing capital investment programmes across the catchment, starting with estimated refurbishment/replacement costs based on the age of assets.

A new FCERM grant in aid programme will start in 2026/27.

2. Summary of Key Planning Issues

We continue to receive an increasing number of consent applications and developer enquiries across the catchment. Managing this workload is a significant pressure on available staff resources.

As a result, we are prioritising this critical work and will not be including any specific information for any Board report, other than if directly requested.

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 Engagement with the Local Planning Authorities (LPA)

We have been prioritising proactive efforts to reengage with local planning departments and developers since the new Head of Technical Services started.

There is particular concern about the larger strategic sites which will take several years to build out and involve several RMAs. In view of our revised charging model a more robust response to developers seeking advice and guidance is being adopted which may enable additional resource that would benefit the MLC and the Board in dealing with increasing workloads.

Policies and processes are being reviewed and updated.

3. Strategic Issues

The Consulting Engineer has responded on the Board's behalf concerning the following:

3.1 Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk

Consultation to IDBs

Following a request a copy of the Board's GIS files have been issued.

Local Plan 2021-2040

The Council advised in February that the draft Local Plan has been found to be 'sound' which means that it meets the legal requirements as well as the policy tests which are set out in national planning policy. It marks the end of the examination process and means that the Plan can be formally adopted.

3.2 Fenland District Council

Fenland District Council 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.

3.5 **Cambridgeshire County Council**

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**

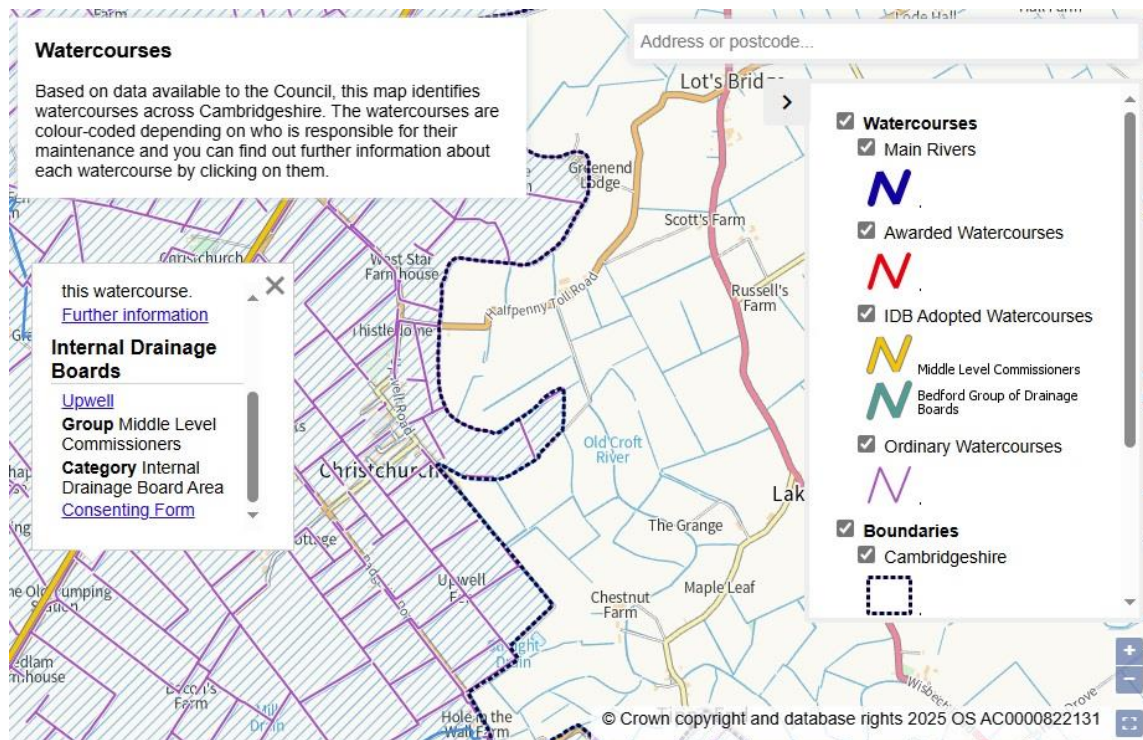
Given that a year has passed since the workshop and no meaningful correspondence or outcomes appear to have been received, the Commissioners requested an update on this programme. However, it is understood that these sites are included in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy: 2024 Action Plan Review. See below.

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](#) that can be used to identify location of, and responsibility for different, watercourses.



Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy (FRMS): 2024 Action Plan Review

A plan review has been prepared to provide an update on the progress of actions listed in the Cambridgeshire FRMS, which was adopted in 2022, highlighting contributions, completed work and any risks or challenges.

The contents are currently being reviewed in detail, but it summarises that:

“Progress has already been made against 54 of the 58 actions with 6 actions now having been completed. There are several obstacles that impede progress in some areas, these are outlined below. Despite that and the persisting wet weather conditions, headway has been made across most actions and by multiple partners.

The importance of clear communication remains in focus, whilst the impactful action led by community groups and local landowners continues to provide positive results.

There is still some uncertainty from external factors that influence the work we do. In response to this we take an adaptive approach so we can be prepared for the changing circumstances.”

3.5 Norfolk County Council

Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (NM&WLP)

The independent examination of the Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (NM&WLP) has now concluded, with the publication of the Planning Inspector’s Report on 24th March. The proposed adoption of the NM&WLP will be considered at a meeting of the Full Council in May.

3.6 Cranbrook/Counter Drain (CCD) Flood Risk Management (FRM) Strategy

The previous request for outcomes associated with the Strategy, Lidar, ground water, topographical survey, hydraulic modelling etc have not yet been received.

The Environment Agency continues to work on this strategy.

4. IDB Recovery Fund T2B

Funding allocations for Tranche 2 were confirmed in mid-November and work has now been completed including repairs to weed screens, pumps and controls and channel repairs.

Works were included in a second bid for Tranche 2B to be delivered by 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) there is currently an allocation available for 2025/26 to progress a system study. This will start with a desktop study/gap analysis to write a scope for a system study including inspections and surveys to start delivery in 2026/27 if further funding is available.

The Board is asked to acknowledge this approach.

- 5.2 Refer to section 2.1.

- 5.3 It is recommended that the Board considers the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement. Pumping station replacement costs are included on the capital programme. Further investment will be needed in the interim and will be developed further in line with the Key Health Indicators.

The Board is asked to consider the development of a capital investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

- 5.4 The Board's Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield

Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Programme

Appendix 2: List of applications since last report

Appendix 3: M&E Report

Appendix 2

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

MLC Ref.	Council Ref.	Applicant	Type of Development	Location
578	CCC/24/102/DCON	Cambridgeshire County Council	Education (Classroom extension)	Crown Road, Christchurch
579	F/YR24/0598/RM	Mr P Russell	Residential (6 dwellings)	Padgetts Road, Christchurch
580	F/YR24/0970/FDC	FDC	Residence (New dwelling)	Crown Avenue, Christchurch
581	24/02179/F	Mr & Mrs Wright	Conversion (Barn to dwelling)	Wisbech Road, Tipps End, Welney
582	F/YR24/0997/F	Mr T Demetriou	Holiday Park (16 caravan pitches)	Sixteen Foot Bank, Stonea
583	CCC/24/24/124/FUL	Cambridgeshire County Council	Education (Mobile classroom)	Crown Road, Christchurch
584	F/YR25/0122/O	Mrs J Brazil	Residential (Extension annexe)	Church Road, Christchurch
585	25/00673/F	Scott Lansdell-Hill	Residence (Conversion of garage to extension)	Silt Road, Nordelph

The following infiltration device applications have been acknowledged since the last meeting:

MLC Ref	Council Ref	Option 1 (Self-certification) or Option 2 (Checking Form)	Location	Date acknowledged
558 & 572	24/00157/Disc-A	Option 2	Birchfield Road, Nordelph	18/11/2024

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

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	7
Meeting:	UPWELL IDB	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Dave Bantoft

1. M&E key messages and advice

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

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

1.1 Padgetts Corner

The pump contactors were replaced in December 2023 and have operated well since. The level sensor is mounted quite low in the sump and it needs to be investigated to see if this can be raised to prevent intermittent faults at high levels. This type of sensor fails when the level is within 300mm of the sensor face. The level controller on this site has become temperamental due to age and the height of the sensor will be addressed when the new controller is fitted. The replacement unit for Padgetts had to be used at Bedlam as the controller there failed, a replacement was ordered and the level controller replacement including moving the sensor head is in hand for fitment this summer. The pump here has some vibration which is being monitored in case it starts to deteriorate.

1.2 Upwell Fen

The discharge pipe thrust block leak has deteriorated. The thrust block is cracked and water is seeping out of cracks, it leaks out more with the pump running. The pipe work is metal up to the joint at the thrust block, then concrete through the bank into the Old Bedford River. The concrete pipe just outside the compound is now exposed as the land has shrunk. The district officer has requested that the landowner does not use this access to prevent damage to the pipe.

A stock of clay should be kept onsite in case an emergency repair is needed.

1.3 Cock Fen

The pumps have run well this season. The gearbox overhaul and engine mount replacement have cured the vibration on pump 1. The alternator is not charging on pump 2 and the district officer has this in hand.

The engines control panel is now 50 years old and should be replaced as it is corroded inside and can not be deemed reliable, this is likely to be in the region of £15 to £20k. If the plan going forward is not to continue with the electrification of this site, then the engine control panel should be replaced, and consideration given to replacement of the engines. The control panel for the electrification could be offered for sale.

1.4 Nordelph

The level probe bracket needs replacing as is heavily corroded. The electrical panel soft start is now obsolete, and consideration should be given to replacing this control panel as it is in excess of 30 years old and parts would be difficult to source quickly in the event of a failure. The level controller is also at an age where it is more at risk of failure, this would be replaced as part of the panel refurbishment. The replacement of the control panel is likely to be in the region of £15k to £20k.

The electricity meter issue is still ongoing. Corona energy have been calculating bills from our estimates based on run hours of the pump and we need to ensure EDF do the same until this issue is resolved.

1.5 Bedlam Bridge

The level controller failed during December and the unit that had been purchased for Padgetts had been temporarily fitted to allow automatic operation of the site. This has now been fully installed.

2. **Pumping summary**

The main pumping report will be provided by the District Officer.

3. **Inspections, maintenance and minor works**

3.1 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out during September 2024.

3.2 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are in date. The Bungalow is due for testing this year as it is residential.

	EICR	
Station	EICR Date	EICR Due
Bedlam Bridge	21-Jul-2022	21-Jul-2027
Cock Fen	21-Jul-2022	21-Jul-2027
Nordelph	20-Jul-2022	20-Jul-2027
Nordelph Bungalow	18-Aug-2022	18-Aug-2025
Padgetts Corner	21-Jul-2022	21-Jul-2027
Upwell Fen	20-Jul-2022	20-Jul-2027

4. **Pumping Station Key Dates**

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

Station	Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul	Motor O/H	Controls
Bedlam Bridge	1948	1980(1) 2006 (2)	2015(1) 2006(2)	2015 (1) 2006 (2)	2006
Cock Fen	1975	1975	2013(1) 2012 (2)	2010 (1) 2010 (2)	1975
Nordelph	1932/1970	1970	2011	2011	1970/1991
Padgetts Corner	1980	2012	2012	2012	2015
Upwell Fen	1967	1976	2011	2011	2018

	Weedscreen			
Station	Bars	WSC	WSC O/H	Controls
Bedlam Bridge	1980	2006	2006	2006
Cock Fen	2018	2018	2018	2018
Nordelph	1991 / 2020	N/A	N/A	N/A
Padgetts Corner	1980	N/A	N/A	N/A
Upwell Fen	2018	2018	2018	2018

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

The Board considered the Reports of the Consulting Engineers.

Capital Programme

Miss Ablett advised that £50,000 had been allocated in the Environment Agency's programme for 2025-2026 towards the cost of a District Wide Study but had not been approved for this purpose. She reported that as the funding was not available for the studies, the Consulting Engineers had met with the Environment Agency and enquired whether this allocation could be spent on pumping station improvements, i.e. control panels and the like. Miss Ablett confirmed this had recently been agreed and advised any works would need to be undertaken in 2025-2026. She added that the Consulting Engineer, Dave Bantoft would be looking to contact the Chairman on his return from annual leave.

Members acknowledged the approach regarding a system study, together with inspections and surveys being undertaken in 2026-2027 if further funding was made available and will consider an asset refurbishment/replacement plan with the Consulting Engineer, Dave Bantoft.

RESOLVED

- i) That the reports be approved.

B.2166 Chairman's Items

1. Pump Overhaul Programme

The Chairman advised the Board had resolved at their last meeting to discuss a pump overhaul programme and referred to the pumping station key dates included in the Consulting Engineer's report.

The condition of the existing pumps and the Board having the ability to redirect water via several of the pumping stations, if required, was discussed by Members.

Members requested that Mr Bantoft, the M & E consulting engineer be asked to attend the January 2026 meeting at which a programme could be considered further. Miss Ablett reminded Members there would be a charge for his attendance.

2. Standing Advice Notes

The Chairman referred to information that had been included in a previous agenda regarding standing advice notes relating to the Middle Level flood and drainage infrastructure capacity. He enquired whether members considered the Board should issue similar advice notes regarding its system and this was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the Board adopt and issue similar standing advice notes

3. Inspection

a) Chestnut Avenue

the Chairman referred to the headwall at the Old Croft River overspill at Chestnut Avenue, which was not operating correctly as the door had been dug out during drainworks. He enquired whether Members considered a new water control structure should be installed to control the water levels.

RESOLVED

That a new water control structure be installed.

That the environmental officer be requested to undertake a survey before works commence.

b) Upwell Fen Pumping Station

i) The Chairman reminded Members to the crack in the discharge pipe thrust block and enquired whether members considered this should be repaired and a stock of clay be held on site in the meantime

ii) The Chairman referred to the corrosion to the weedscreen hoist drum and confirmed that a quote would be obtained, as was previously requested by the Board.

RESOLVED

i) That the Consulting Engineer be requested to arrange for the repair of the discharge pipe thrust block and a stock of clay be held on site in the meantime.

ii) That the District Foreman contacts Karl Gilbert Engineering to request a quote for recoating the weedscreen hoist drum.

d) Cock Fen Pumping Station

The Chairman referred to the corrosion to the exhaust, which could damage the pumping station brickwork, and enquired whether Members wished for this to be repaired.

The Chairman reminded members of the conversation had during the inspection regarding electrification, upgrading of diesel engines, replacement of the control panel and the installation of CT cabinets.

The Chairman reported that the M & E Consulting Engineer considered that electrification of the pumping station was not the best option for the Board. He added that if the electrification of the pumping station did not proceed a refund from UK Power Networks would be received and the control panel purchased from Raands would be sold.

The Chairman stated that the Board should take advice from the M & E Consulting Engineer regarding matters concerning Cock Fen Pumping station and enquired whether Members considered this was the best course of action. All Members agreed it was.

RESOLVED

- i) That the corroded engine exhaust be repaired by the District Foreman.
- ii) That the M & E Consulting Engineer be asked to attend the January 2026 meeting at which all matters concerning Cock Fen Pumping Station would be discussed.

e) Bedlam Bridge Pumping Station

As agreed at the inspection Members approved that the manhole cover over the sonars should be repaired and the outfall pipes repainted.

RESOLVED

That the District Foreman undertakes the necessary repairs as agreed at the inspection.

4. Water Levels

The Chairman reported that he had recently been contacted by a ratepayer asking for the water levels to be increased.

He advised that it was not possible to amend the water levels for one ratepayer as the Board had to consider what was best for all ratepayers.

This was discussed by Members and it was agreed that the Consulting Engineer should be requested to inspect levels within the District and advise on whether any additional water control structures were required.

Miss Ablett advised that there would be a cost attached for the Middle level Commissioners to carry out an inspection and advise the Board, as it may also be necessary to use consultants.

Members asked for an indicative cost to be provided. It was agreed that the Consulting Engineer be asked to discuss the matter with the Chairman and the Chairman to then consult with the Finance Committee before any decision is made on whether to proceed with the inspection and report.

The Vice Chairman enquired whether the Board was able to advise a landowner that a culvert over a Board's drain is not fit for purpose. Miss Ablett advised the Board were able to request for culverts to be repaired if the flow of the water in the drain was restricted due to the culverts being in a state of disrepair.

RESOLVED

That the Consulting Engineer be asked to discuss the water levels within the District in order for a quote to be obtained.

That when a quote is received the Chairman to consult with the Finance Committee before any decision is made on whether to proceed with the inspection and report.

B.2167 Health and Safety

Viz:



Site Safety Inspection Record

Upwell IDB

Complete

Name of organisation:	Upwell IDB
Date of site visit	20.01.2025 13:01 GMT
Address of inspected premises	Pates Farm Wisbech Road Tips End Welney Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE14 9SQ
Name of Advisor	Martin Clark
Time of arrival at site:	20.01.2025 13:01 GMT
Audit Name	Upwell IDB

Audit	
An opening meeting was held with Ken Goodger	
Have there been any accidents since our last visit?	No
None recorded.	
Have there been any new starters since our last visit?	No
1 The pumping stations at Bedlam Bridge, Cock Fen, Nordelph, Padgetts Corner and Upwell fen were discussed with Ken Goodger. No significant issues were raised and it was understood that the observations previously raised at Nordelph pumping station (where the pump manager resides) have now been rectified, including removal of obsolete equipment and improving housekeeping.	
2 As discussed all pumping stations have a requirement to be provided with additional signage to indicate, High voltage, automated machinery and the location and emergency contact details of persons responsible. It is recommended that Middle Level Commissioners provide a suitable standard format site sign that can be amended to provide site specific details (location in what 3 words etc) .	
Photographic Risk Assessment	
Advisor's signature  Martin Clark 20.01.2025 21:23 GMT	
Departure time	20.01.2025 14:21 GMT
Photographic Risk Assessments closed out during the visit. Nil	
Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments	0 From 0 to 99

The Chairman gave a verbal update following his meeting with COPE Safety Management and reported that no concerns or recommendations had been raised.

B.2168 District Foreman's Report

Viz:

Upwell IDB work report January to May 2025

Drainworks

The 2025 drainworks programme will be as stated in the January report concentrating on the Cock Fen and Nordelph side of the district while managing any other issues that may arise or that have been previously planned.

I will be mapping crops soon ready to draw up the plans for dredging whilst attempting to minimise excavator travelling and maximise dredging then issues notices to landowners for planned works.

I planted several saplings inside the new fence and gate near Rallingham Hall which will reinstate the hedge row that was removed in past dredging, the new gate makes it much easier to access with the flail mower.

The flail mowing of Euximoor IDB was completed with a total of 106 hours flailing and I am waiting to hear if we will be working with them again once their board meeting has been held in late May, also I have been assisting them with water levels and pump levels.

Pumping Stations

Bedlam Bridge Pump - The pumps are both working well, the new level control system was fitted in February replacing the temporary unit, the weedscreen cleaner is working well at present.

Cock Fen Pump - Both pumps and engines are running well, pump 1 engine was serviced in February and I noticed recently the exhaust is badly corroded and will need to be replaced on the outside of the building. The weedscreen cleaner ok although it does have an intermittent fault now and again which has been reported.

Padgetts Pump - The pump is working well and it will have a new level control fitted in the near future.

Upwell Fen - The pump is running well at present, there is an ongoing issue regarding the electric meter as EDF want to fit a smart meter but we do not want to end up with a situation like Nordelph pump, I have met a couple of engineers and the only real way forward is a CT meter the same as Nordelph requires but no one wants to foot the bill as they are expensive, middle level have several other IDB pumps with the same issues.

Nordelph - The pump is running well although as mentioned above there is the very long issue concerning the electric meter which has been going on for several years now. A new gate was fitted last year to the yard entrance and along with a ring doorbell I have had a while makes it more secure and being able to see who enters the yard at any time.

Works Truck

The truck has been going well lately although it was back in the garage for heater plugs which caused a fault, it will have its service and MOT in September.

Bomford Flailmower

We've had a few minor issues with the flail mower but overall it has been going well, 2 new cut off taps we're recently fitted to improve the travelling on the extension ram. I will be giving it a good going over in preparation the start of the cutting season and improving the control arm.

Massey Ferguson Tractor

The tractor has been going well with only a few minor issues including some sensors being replaced.

Summary

All pumps have been turned since the end of March in an attempt to preserve as much water as possible in the district especially with the very dry April and May we have had. We are very restricted with any intake to our district from rivers and I think going forward we are going to have to explore options to replenish the water in our district as once people start irrigating the levels will drop quickly.

If anyone has any questions or queries please don't hesitate to contact me or I am happy to answer questions at the meeting.

Carl Nunn

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Pumping undertaken during the year

	Total No. of Hours to date	Hours run in 2024/25	Hours run in 2023/24
Cock Fen			
No.1 Perkins	3584	369	511
No.2 Perkins	4685	124	1145
Weedscreen	3775*	1589*	1387
Upwell Fen	2049	304	707
Weedscreen	425	63	78
Nordelph	4952	116	336
Bedlam Bridge			
No.1 Old Electric	2406	216	293
No.2 New Electric	5648	183	826
Weedscreen	2076	67	231
Padgetts Corner	3433	285	933

*Cock Fen weedscreen cleaner has a slight issue which has been reported which is if there is a fault and it stops working the hours continue to add up even though its not working.

Oil Stocks on the 31st March 2025 were: -

Cock Fen	-	10500 litres of Diesel Oil	10 litres of Engine Oil
Nordelph	-	3250 litres of Diesel Oil	0 litres of Engine Oil 10 litres of Hydraulic Oil

Plant and vehicle

The Massey Ferguson tractor has worked **749** hrs during the year and to date has worked a total of **1870** hours , It was delivered to us in July with **1121** hours on the clock.

The Board's Ford Ranger Pick Up truck was purchased second hand in September 2022 and to date has a mileage of **98371**.

Carl Nunn

Mr Nunn referred the Board to his written report, which was noted by the Board.

B.2169 Finance Committee Report

The Chairman advised there was nothing to report as the Committee had not met since the last Board meeting.

B.2170 Governance

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	12
Meeting:	UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	GOVERNANCE
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Review the Board's Policy Statement.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. To review and approve the publishing of Exercise of Public Rights
- E. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments
- F. To note and approve the submission of the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra.
- G. To review and approve the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2025 and authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement.

1. Internal Controls

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The Board needs to ensure there is adequate separation of duties within its running and decision making. Members are asked to refresh themselves as to the Member Code of Conduct (available within the Governance Documents on the Board's webpage) and ensure their declarations of interests are clear and up-to-date.
- 1.3 If a Board Member (or their business) undertakes contracted work (or bids for such work) for the Board it is recommended that they be excluded from any decision making as a matter of course and that appropriate contractual arrangements are in place.
- 1.4 If the Member also has a lead role for the Board (eg Chairman/Vice Chairman) then it is important that the Board puts in place safeguards to ensure a separation of duties, particularly being clear on who is acting as lead client for the contractor.

2. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

- 2.1 The Board are asked to consider and approve their Risk Management Strategy.

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

UPWELL IDB
INSURED VALUE OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS & BUNGALOW

	As At 1st April 2025
Cock Fen Pumping Station	2,600,000.00
Padgetts Corner Pumping Station	590,000.00
Bedlam Bridge Pumping Station	2,100,000.00
Upwell Fen Pumping Station	1,400,000.00
Nordelph Pumping Station	1,600,000.00
	8,290,000.00
Nordelph Bungalow	130,000.00
	8,420,000.00

The Board are asked to consider index-linking their pumping station valuations for insurance purposes.

3. 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 review and approve the Policy Statement – Appendix 1

4. IDB1

4.1 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.

4.2 To note and support the IDB1 return submitted on their behalf for the year 2023/24 is included as Appendix 2.

5. **Annual Governance Statement:**

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

6. **Exercise of Public Rights**

6.1 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.

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

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

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

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

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

7.1 The clerk to report.

Author Name: Paul Burrows

Role: Clerk

Appendix 1 Policy Statement

Appendix 2 IDB1 2023/24

Appendix 3 Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025

Upwell Internal Drainage Board

Administered by:



Governance

Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management

1 Issued

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

2 Introduction

Purpose

- 2.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Upwell 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 Upwell 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 Upwell Internal Drainage Board.

- 2.5 This Policy Statement sets out the Board’s approach to meeting the national policy aims and objectives in this area, as stated in the *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England 2020* (the National Strategy); the statement will be revised to reflect future revisions of the National Strategy. It summaries what plans the Board have in place to manage water levels and reduce flood risk, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment, and ensuring good governance and local accountability. Copies of this Policy Statement are available from the Board’s office at Middle Level Offices, 85 Whittlesey Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AH. Digital copies can be downloaded from the Middle Level Commissioners website: www.middlelevel.gov.uk.

3. Governance and local accountability

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

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

Aim

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

Objectives

- 4.2 The 2011 Strategy sets out five objectives in pursuance of the overall aim as follows.
- understand the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, working together to put in place long term sustainable plans to manage these risks and making sure that other plans take account of them;
 - avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood and coastal erosion risk and being careful to manage land elsewhere to avoid increasing risks;
 - build, maintain and improve flood and coastal erosion management infrastructure and systems to reduce the likelihood of harm to people and damage to the economy, environment and society as well as achieving wider environmental benefits;

- increase public awareness of the risk that remains and engaging with people at risk to encourage them to take action to manage the risks that they face and to make their property more resilient; and
- improving the detection, forecasting and issue of warnings of flooding, co-ordinating a rapid response to flood emergencies and promoting faster recovery from flooding.

4.3 The Board supports the national aim and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels and the Board's policy and approach will be consistent with them.

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

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

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

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

5.3 The following outlines the key details of the District:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| • Total area of the drainage district: | 4847 ha |
| • Catchment area draining to and including the District: | 4847 ha |
| • Area of Agricultural Land: | 4343 ha |
| • Area of other (non-agricultural) land: | 504 ha |

5.4 Assets for which the Board have operational responsibility:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • Water Level Control Structures: | 16 No |
| • Watercourses (maintained): | 72 km |
| • Raised embankments: | 0 km |
| • Reservoirs: | 0 ha |
| • Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS): | 0 no |
| • Pumping Stations: | 5 no |

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| • Main Rivers: | 9 km |
| • Raised embankments/flood walls: | 9 km |
| • Pumping Stations: | 0 no |

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

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

6.1 Through the operation, maintenance and improvement of watercourses and other water control assets within the District, the Board seeks to achieve a general standard of water level

management that enables navigation, the drainage and irrigation of agricultural land, reduces flood risk to developed areas, and sustains environmental features throughout the District.

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

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

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

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

8. Communication and transparency

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

9. Working together

- 9.1 The Board will co-operate and share information with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion flood risk management function. The Board will contribute to strategies, plans and consultations relevant to its catchment and functions.
- 9.2 The Board will assist the Environment Agency wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, and assist Risk Management Authorities where necessary during flood emergencies. The Board will participate as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.
- 9.3 The Board have provided the Environment Agency and other local Risk Management Authorities with information on the major flood defence assets for which they are responsible. The information is available from the Environment Agency.

- 9.4 The Board will seek to work with all relevant local organisations, in carrying out its flood and coastal erosion risk management functions and environmental obligations.

10. Environmental Measures

- 10.1 The Board have nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 and Amendments 2011, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, the Environment Act 2021, and as a competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

- 10.1.1 Further to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021, the Board will review their Water Level Management Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans with reference to the local nature recovery strategy and relevant species conservation or protected site strategy for their areas.

- 10.2 Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work constitutes vegetation control and desilting and is often a vital and routine requirement. Whilst inevitably some short-term impacts will arise, this management is often essential to maintain the distinct assemblage of aquatic habitat and species present in the District. Such work will be carried out in a way that manages the potential risks to the environment. The Board have access to environmental expertise from their Ecology and Environmental Services Manager and have a Biodiversity Action Plan, developed according to ADA and Natural England guidelines, which indicate the way in which their functions can be carried out in a way appropriate to the environment and how the environment can be enhanced. The Board maintain only a small proportion of the total watercourse length in the District, the significant majority being the responsibility of the adjoining land owners or of other bodies.

- 10.3 When carrying out work, be it maintenance or improvement, and consistent with the need to maintain satisfactory flood protection standards, the Board will aim to:-

- Avoid any unnecessary or long term damage to agricultural interests and to natural habitats and species;
- Carry out the monitoring of any gains and losses of biodiversity and report annually to the Environment Agency; and
- Take appropriate opportunities to achieve multiple environmental outcomes and work with natural processes, wherever possible, including the enhancement of habitats and water bodies within the District.

- 10.4 The District encompasses no sites of national and international biological or geological interest.

- 10.5 The Board has no Water Level Management Plan.

- 10.6 The Board will play its full role in sustaining the Water Level Management Plans prepared for SSSIs to maintain, or bring sites into, favourable condition, in conjunction with Natural England and other interested parties and review the plans in accordance with guidance.

Internal drainage boards in England



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Annual Report for the year ended

31 March 2024

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

No later than 28 February 2025 a copy must be provided to:

- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs via flood.reports@defra.gov.uk
- Asset Management and Engineering, Environment Agency via idbfund@environment-agency.gov.uk
- The Chief Executives of:
 - all local authorities that pay special levies to the Board;
 - all County Councils or London Boroughs within which the Board is situated.

Please complete the form electronically, and please answer **ALL QUESTIONS**.

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

UPWELL 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	30,420
2. KINGS LYNN & WEST NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL	46,144
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	76,564

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		192,092
B. Special Levies		61,886
C. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		
D. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		
E. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		
F. PSCAs overall total		
Breakdown:		
from EA		
from other RMAs		
G. Loans		
H. Rechargeable Works		635
I. Interest and Investment Income		4,277
J. Rents and Acknowledgements		
K. Other Income		853
Write back of provisions		100
Consents		
Total income		259,893
EXPENDITURE		
L. New Works and Improvement Works		8,322
M. Total precept to the Environment Agency		42,853
N. Watercourse maintenance		73,099
O. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		31,993
P. Administration		25,713
Q. PSCAs		

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

R. Rechargeable Works		
S. Finance Charges		30,318
T. Biodiversity enhancement and conservation – overall total		690
Breakdown:		
General, across the whole region	690	
SSSI specific, where relevant		
U. Other Expenditure		
Insurance		3,834
Electricity costs – overall total		69,833
Breakdown (if possible):		
Standing charge (per annum)	3,311	
Unit charge (per annum)	66,522	
Fuel (petrol and diesel costs) – overall total		29,999
Breakdown:		
Pumping stations	20,877	
Fleet and plant machinery	9,122	
Total expenditure		316,654
EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
V. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		(56,761)
W. Developers Funds income not applied in year		33,568
X. Grant income not applied in year		

Value of drainage rates outstanding at year end?

0.606 %
£ 1,162.25

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)?..... 31/05/2024
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?

72.1 kilometres

29. How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

5 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

5
2

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)?

4.51 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?

19

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

5

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

14

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.

11

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

3

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

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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

Signature

Date

18/02/2025

Name in BLOCK LETTERS

MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT

Designation

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Email address

sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed		Yes means that this authority:
	Yes	No	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about 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

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Miss Ablett referred to the recommendations and resolutions the Board had been asked to make.

a) Policy Reviews

The Board considered and reviewed the policy statement.

RESOLVED

The Board approved their updated policy statement.

b) Risk Management Assessment & Insured Values

The Board considered their Risk Management Strategy and insured sums.

RESOLVED

i) The Board approved the sums insured and that these be index linked going forward.

ii) 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).

c) Review of Internal Controls

Miss Ablett reported that the internal controls the Middle Level Commissioners have in place in their services to the Board are available on the Board's webpage.

The Board considered and expressed satisfaction with the current system of internal controls and did not highlight the requirement for any additional controls.

d) DEFRA IDB1 Return

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

e) Annual Governance Statement

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

f) Exercise of Public Rights

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

g) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Miss Ablett reported that as part of the Annual Governance review the Board were required to consider if there were any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the authority.

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.

B.2171 Finance Report: looking back

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	13
Meeting:	UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 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 <u>Storm Recovery Grant</u> Following the setting of the rates for 2024/2025 details concerning the Storm recovery Grant were released and claims had to be submitted within an incredibly tight timeframe. A claim for £48,081.58 was submitted on behalf of the Board for excess winter pumping costs (Tranche 1) which was successful and has now been paid. <u>Actual Expenditure against Budget</u> For 2024/2025 the Board had estimated expenditure for the year of £313,148 and set a rate of 33.25p to raise this through agricultural drainage rates and Special Levies. Included in the estimated expenditure was £34,647 to be raised to reinstate balances following the events of 2023/24. Net Expenditure in 2024/25 was lower than the estimated budget because of several reasons. Telephone and Insurances were higher than budget because of higher insurance premiums. Repairs and Renewals was over budget due to higher than anticipated expenditure. General Maintenance was £11,725 lower than budget due to less works completed than anticipated. Fuel costs were £37,549 lower than budget, following a relatively average year for pumping volumes. Administration cost were £2,481 higher. Other expenditure was generally in line with budget. Other Improvement costs relating to the pump overhaul and repairs to the gear box at Cock Fen Pumping Station in the year at a total cost of £6,246, the work carried out was fully funded from the Storm Recovery Grant Tranche 2. As outlined above funded following the setting of the rates for 2024/25 we received a grant for the excess pumping costs from 2023/24, the amount that was recognised to the general fund was £48,081.58. Over-all this gives an increase in the Boards General Fund of £138,148 to a balance of £278,945 at 31 st March 2025 These balances are reflected in the Boards financial statements and Annual Return which they are requested to review and approve.			

1. Payments for 2024/25

1.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 1

2. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2024/2025:

2.1 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

3. Storm Recovery Grant – T2A

3.1 During the year MLC were successful in securing Grant Aid on behalf of some of the IDB's that they administer. As a result of the decisions made when setting the rates for 2024/2025 works that had already been started or was to be started meet the criteria to be Grant eligible. The following work was done and was 100% Grant funded as a result:

<u>Work Done</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Penny rate equivalent</u>
Cock Fen PS - Pump Overhaul	£2,786	0.003p
Cock Fen PS – Repairs to Gear Box	£3,460	0.004p
	<u>£6,246</u>	<u>0.007p</u>

Author Name: Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett

Role: Responsible Finance Officer/Assistant Treasurer

Appendix 1 Payments for 2024/25

Appendix 2 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/25

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDPayments 2024/2025 (1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025)

Association of Drainage Authorities Great Ouse Branch - Subscription 2024	36.00
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Supply and fit starter motor to MK15 YAY	362.19
Middle Level Commissioners - Assisting insurance assessor	198.87
Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety Re-charge 2023-2024 (Account from COPE Safety Management)	600.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for MK15 YAY and replacement of RCD at bungalow at Nordelph pumping station (Accounts from Allstar and C M S Electrical)	431.84
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	568.99
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	672.90
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and travelling	13,175.78
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,148.38
Richard Askew Supplies Ltd - Batteries, oil filters and paper towels	913.01
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	3,629.41
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	4,819.59
EE - Mobile telephone charges	21.10
Ken Goodger Farming - District Officer's fee 2023-2024	2,421.00
Russell Fowler - Drain maintenance and flail mowing	463.20
Environment Agency - Precept	30,260.30
Middle Level Commissioners - Telephone charges (Account from Anglia Farmers)	71.52
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for MK15 YAY (Account from Allstar)	319.83
Miss S Ablett - Expenses in connection with Board meeting (Account from The Lamb and Flag)	380.20
EE - Mobile telephone charges	37.13
Richard Askew Supplies Ltd - Air filters	61.73
Richard Askew Supplies Ltd - Battery, air filters and temperature switch	272.22
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Supply and fit new leaf sprongs with heavy duty springs to MK15 YAY	675.45
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Remove and replace near side rear leaf spring to MK15 YAY	90.00
Glen Stittle - Supply and install double radiator in bungalow at Nordelph pumping station	320.00
Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd - New Bomford Buzzard flail mower	48,594.00
Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd - Supply and fit ballast rear wheels to Massey Ferguson tractor AY21 BHK	516.12
Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd - Part exchange of Shelbourne Reynolds flail mower	(17,400.00)
AGCO Finance	10,730.00
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	6,709.78
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
EE - Mobile telephone charges	19.76
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2023-2024 accounts)	1,662.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to pump at Cock Fen pumping station (Account from Allertons)	662.52
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for MK15 YAY (Account from Allstar)	216.57
Middle Level Commissioners - Court costs	0.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for MK15 YAY (Account from Allstar)	324.86
Fenland Fire Appliance LLP - Servicing of fire extinguishers	151.14
Richard Askew Supplies Ltd - Knapsack 8 litre sprayer, 5 litre jug and gloves	89.24
Watson Fuels - Supply of 4,121 litres of gas oil	3,288.56
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, work in connection with the discharge pipe at Cock Fen pumping station, planning and development applications)	1,939.80

Murray Fencing Ltd - Supply and install post and rail fencing with pair of 3 metre gates near Rallingham Hall and a 4.2 metre wide gate at Nordelph pumping station	1,946.09
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
LW Vehicle Services Limited - MOT and service to MK15 YAY	1,202.51
Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd - 50 hour service of flail mower	747.07
EE - Mobile telephone charges	29.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit fee (2023-2024 accounts)	1,008.00
Environment Agency - Precept	30,260.29
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	3,629.41
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	4,819.59
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages and telephone charges	13,034.23
Middle Level Commissioners - Telemetry charges	1,152.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	5,006.09
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of death in service insurance, road tax MY15 YAY, roundup and diesel (Accounts from UNUM, Towergate, Allstar and Hutchinson)	1,910.77
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Work in connection with Catchment study, planning and development applications)	6,659.70
Richard Askew Agricultural Supplies - 25 litres of Enduro, combination padlocks, brake cleaner and 5 litre oil jug	161.58
Richard Askew Agricultural Supplies - 12 lithium complex cartridges, brake cleaner 205 litres of Adblue and 25 litres of gear oil	358.82
Thurlow Nunn Standen - 25 litres of agri-supreme 10W/30	91.57
Watson Fuels - Supply of 2,500 litres of gas oil	2,007.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	30.72
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
Hunt & Coombs Solicitors - Legal fees in connection with the easement for Cock Fen pumping station	500.00
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
Anglia Farmers - Electricity refund	-1.29
Anglia Farmers - Supply of 7,253 of gas oil	5,825.14
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
Richard Askew Agricultural Supplies - 205 litres of Adblue	202.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Environmental Officer Contribution	1,086.75
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	4,152.11
AGCO Finance	1,667.47
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscription 2025	1,246.80
Public Works Loan Board - Loan repayment	6,709.78
Miss S Ablett - Expenses in connection with Board meeting (Account from The Lamb and Flag)	292.05
Middle Level Commissioners - Insurance premium for Tractor AY21 BHK and flailmower (Account from Towergate)	1,365.28
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for AU14 UTS (Account from Allstar)	292.85
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of diesel for AU14 UTS (Account from Allstar)	195.58
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of sleepers for fuel tank base at bungalow (Account from Outwell Timber)	98.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution towards retirement gift	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	1,207.18
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, work in connection with the GPS levels at Bedlam Bridge pumping station, planning and development applications)	759.90
AGCO Finance	1,667.47

P Clabon - Supply of hedging	268.80
Norfolk County Council - Refund of consent application fee	50.00
Hyperion Security Specialists - Annual SIM charge for Jablotron alarm and for 4g router	342.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	20.40
Richard Askew Agricultural Supplies - Gloves, combination padlock and tape	60.35
Littleport & Downham IDB - Drain maintenance	7,600.00
LW Vehicle Services Limited - Repairs to heater and diagnostics to MK16 YAY	410.30
P Clabon - District Officer's Fee for 2024-2025	2,603.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery, travelling, health & safety contract and works in connection with storm recovery tranche 1 claim	15,227.86
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (Bedlam Bridge pumping station)	5,235.18
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (Cock Fen pumping station)	448.31
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (Nordelph pumping station)	2,414.40
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (Padgetts Corner pumping station)	279.13
Corona Energy - Electricity supply (Upwell Fen pumping station)	7,815.87
Corona Energy - Electricity supply - Payments on account	77,125.69
District Labour	44,767.21
	<u>397,341.49</u>

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

Appendix 2

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025 GENERAL FUND

2025			2024		
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year		Mar-31	Balance Brought Forward	140,512.88
	Precept	44,138.59	2025		
	Insurances, Telephones etc	7,622.95	Mar-31	Rate Income & Special Levies	313,386.03
	Repairs & Renewals (Mechanical)	15,531.43		Interest on Deposit Accounts	2,050.72
	Fuel	29,200.87		Private Works	5,808.00
	Drainworks	16,775.50		Development Charges Account	1,925.00
	Contractors Charges	5,207.00		Consents	150.00
	District Labour	43,024.42			-
	Administration charge, Audit fee, Printing, Stationery, Advertising etc	29,756.39		Asset Replacement Fund	
	Asset Replacement Fund			Depreciation (Plant)	20,299.38
	- Raised in year	-		Cock Fen P/S Electrification	20,299.38
	Loan Repayments:			Write back of provisions	7,980.00
	Principal	18,805.59		Storm Recovery Grant - T1a	48,081.58
	Interest	11,511.97		Storm Recovery Grant - T2a	6,245.74
	<u>Scheme costs</u>				
	Cock Fen Pumping Station - Easement	500.00			
	Depreciation charge	19,799.38			
	Heavy Plant	19,375.00			
	Light Plant	-			
	Improvement Works - Cock Fen Pumping Station	6,245.74			
	Balance Carried Forward	278,944.50			
		<u>546,439.33</u>			<u>546,439.33</u>

BALANCE SHEET

Capital Section

Liabilities

Capital Provisions	2,967,094.08
Public Works Loan (Outstanding)	446,905.92
	<u>3,414,000.00</u>

Assets

Pumping Stations	3,304,000.00
Nordelph Pumping Station-Bungalow	110,000.00
Heavy Plant	119,754.87
Light Plant	7.00
Small Tool & Equipment	2.00
Oils & Greases	9,580.00
	<u>3,543,343.87</u>

Revenue Section

General Fund	
- Revenue balance	278,944.50
- Asset Fund (plant)	83,494.13
- Asset Fund (capital)	121,605.79
	<u>484,044.42</u>
Sundry Creditors	59,821.47
Development Charges Account	32,132.40
	<u>3,989,998.29</u>

Ratepayers Account - Arrears	13,779.28
Value Added Tax - Refunds due	4,130.16
Sundry Debtors	7,626.45
Private Works Account	864.00
Debtors - Old Croft River Account	-
Balance In Hand -	
Barclays -Treasurer's Account	100,000.00
Barclays -Business Premium Account	314,318.86
National Savings - Treasurer's Account	5,935.67
	<u>420,254.53</u>
	<u>3,989,998.29</u>

Upwell Internal Drainage Board

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2025

Barclays - Treasurers Account 2024/2025

1st April 2024		31st March 2025	
Balance brought forward	380,075.60	Payments made during the year	397,341.49
		Rates payments returned	0
			<u>397,341.49</u>
31st March 2025			
Receipts during the year			
Clerk's collection account	426,839.75		
Interest on deposit accounts	<u>4,745.00</u>	Balance carried forward	414,318.86
	431,584.75		
	<u>811,660.35</u>		<u>811,660.35</u>

National Savings - Treasurers Account 2024/2025

1st April 2024		31st March 2025	
Balance brought forward	5,837.12	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2025			
Interest on deposit accounts	98.55	Balance carried forward	5,935.67
	<u>5,935.67</u>		<u>5,935.67</u>

Barclays Bank PLC

Current Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2025	100,000.00
Less unrepresented cheques	0.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	<u>100,000.00</u>

Cash balances as at 31st March 2025

Barclays Bank PLC

Current Account	100,000.00
Business Premium Account	314,318.86

National Savings

Investment Account per passbook	5,935.67
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<u>Total reconciled cash balances per accounts</u>	<u>420,254.53</u>
--	-------------------

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

Line 1	Balances brought forward		
	General Fund	225,870.96	
	Development charges account	33,567.50	
	Asset replacement fund	57,789.56	
		317,228.02	317,228
Line 2	Rates and Special Levies		
	Agricultural rates	236,582.03	
	Special Levies	76,564.00	
	Penalty	0.00	
	Costs	275.00	
	Write-off	-35.00	
		313,386.03	313,386
Line 3	Total other receipts		
	Interest		
	General fund	2,050.72	
	Development charges account	489.90	
	Asset replacement fund	2,208.41	
	Private works	5,808.00	
	Consent applications	150.00	
	Recoverable Costs	0.00	
	Grant in Aid	0.00	
	Contribution to Old Croft	0.00	
	Discharge contributions	0.00	
	Write Back of Provision	7,980.00	
	Sale of Assets	52,500.00	
	Storm Recovery Grant	48,081.58	
	Storm Recovery Tranche 2a Claim	6,245.74	
		125,514.35	124,514
Line 4	Staff costs		
	Wages/salaries	37,266.63	
	National insurance contributions	4,474.89	
	Pension costs	1,282.90	
	Travelling expenses	0.00	
		43,024.42	43,024
Line 5	Loan repayments		
	PWLB - Principal	18,805.59	
	PWLB - Interest	11,511.97	
		30,317.56	30,318

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

<u>Line 6</u>	All other payments Precept Rates, insurances, telephones Repairs and renewals Fuel Drainworks Administration Development charges fees Contractors charges Improvements Purchase of Asset	44,138.59 7,622.95 15,531.43 29,200.87 16,775.50 29,756.39 0.00 5,207.00 6,745.74 131,395.00 286,373.47	286,373
<u>Line 7</u>	Balances carried forward General Fund Development charges account Asset replacement fund	305,206.96 32,132.40 59,073.59 396,412.95	396,413

Reconciliation

Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6

396,412.95

Reconciliation to Accounts

Balances carried forward per Annual Return - As above

396,412.95

Add Back:-

Adjustments for Prior Years

8,170.25

Depreciation

-19,799.38

Assets acquired in year

131,395.00

Assets disposed of in year

-52,500.00

Profit on disposal

52,498.00

119,763.87

Balances carried forward per Accounts

General Fund

278,944.50

Development charges account

32,132.40

Asset replacement fund - Plant

83,494.13

Asset replacement fund - Capital

121,605.79

516,176.82

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

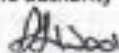
UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	358,899	317,228	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	253,978	313,386	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	5,914	125,514	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	41,127	43,024	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	30,318	30,318	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	230,118	266,373	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	317,228	396,413	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	385,913	420,255	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,540,347	3,570,742	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	465,712	446,906	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PwLB).

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

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

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



Date

28 05 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 reviewed and noted the key finance messages of the Responsible Finance Officer.

The attention of the Board was drawn to the Storm Recovery Grant and that a claim for £48,081.58 had been received.

The Chairman requested that all staff at the Middle Level Commissioners, involved with securing the storm recovery grant monies on behalf of the Board, be thanked for all their hard work undertaken in such a short space of time.

The Chairman enquired whether there had been any further report from Ofgem or ADA regarding the review of electricity standing charges. Miss Ablett answered that she was unsure whether this had been completed, but she would ask the Clerk to confirm.

Payments 2025.

The Board considered and approved the Payments for 2024/2025.

(NB: The Chairman and the Vice Chairman declared an interest in the payments made to them as District Officers.)

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.2172 Finance Report – Looking Forward

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	15
Meeting:	UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	Subject:	FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 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 Rating Estimates for 2025/2026 D. Consider & approve the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2025/2026			
Finance Officer's summary and key messages For the rating estimates for 2024/2025 standard provisions have been made for general expenditure with specific items included where known. Standard figures have been reviewed and approved by the chairman and vice-chairman. Estimates for pumping costs are as problematical as last year in that we need to factor in an 'average' pumping year, taking-into-account the impact of climate change. Further, we will have a new electricity supply contract from October 2025 with no current indications of possible unit costs. The provision is therefore an estimate of pumping volumes at an			

estimate of possible new contract rates (5% increase on 2024/25 rates). Members should therefore consider if they think the provision is reasonable when setting the rate.

The engineer identified these works are still likely to be required during the year:

Upwell Fen pumping station:

Repairs to discharge pipework - £5,000

It is proposed to utilise £5,000 from the Asset Account for the works at Upwell Fen pumping station.

During the year the Board replaced the tractor and flail mower combination, provision has been made in the budget for the depreciation and funding costs of this.

Following discussion with the chairman the budget proposal includes an element increasing balances and therefore maintain the rate at the 2024/2025 level. 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.

Board Members should also consider likely future capital investment requirements at the pumping stations

1. Fees, Remunerations and Subscriptions

- 1.1 Consider the District Labour fees for the Board's employees
- 1.2 Consider the District Officer's fees
- 1.3 Consider charge for hire of plant when engaged on private work for 2026:

The present charges are:-

Flail mower

Present charge - £48 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages etc)

(NB – Travelling time being charged in addition to working time.)

2. Estimates for 2025/26

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

3. Rate Requirements for 2025/26

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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

Appendix 1 Estimates for 2025/26

Appendix 2 Rate Requirements for 2025/26

Appendix 1

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

RATE BUDGET 2025/2026

	<u>Approved budget</u> <u>2024/2025</u> £	<u>Actual to</u> <u>31st March 2025</u> £	<u>Proposed Budget</u> <u>2025/2026</u> £	<u>Remarks</u>
1 District Labour	45,500	43,024	47,105	A - Includes: Service/Repair Tractor-Mower 3,839 Service/Repair Works Truck 1,982 Fencing and Gate 1,622 Pumping Station Maintenance and Repairs 6,009
2 Insurances and Telephones	4,750	7,623	8,250	
3 Repairs and Renewals	10,000	15,531 ^A	11,000	B - Includes for Contractor Hire: Slubbing 20,000
4 General Maintenance	28,500 ^B	16,776 ^C	29,500 ^D	C - Includes for Contractor Hire: Slubbing 7,600 D - Includes for Contractor Hire: Slubbing 9,000
5 Fuel (Oil and Electricity)	66,750	29,201	50,000 ^E	E - Provision based on 2 year average plus increase in rates of 5% from October 2025
6 District Officers' Fees etc	5,200	5,207	5,600	F - Funding for plant replacement strategy
7 Administration Charge, Health and Safety Contract, Audit Fees, Printing, Stationery, Advertising etc	27,275	29,756	32,200	G - Environment Agency Precept 61,731 Middle Level Contribution (16,710) 45,021
8 Plant Replacement Funding	19,375 ^F	19,375 ^F	19,375 ^F	H - Asset replacement fund (Annual Depreciation)
9 Public Works Loan	30,318	30,318	30,318	I - Cock Fen Electrification - Easement 500 Cock Fen - Repairs to Gearbox 3,460 Cock Fen - Pump Overhaul 2,786
10 Environment Agency - Precept	44,139	44,139	45,021 ^G	
11 Tractor / Flail Mower Replacement	22,325 ^H	19,799 ^H	25,274 ^H	J - Upwell P/S - Discharge Pipework Repairs 5,000
12 Improvement Works	10,000	6,746 ^I	5,000 ^J	K - Provision for Reinstatement of Balances Reduced By Winter 23/24 Pumping (not to a 'year-in-hand')
13 Reinstatement of Balances	34,647 ^K	0	30,610	
LESS Deposit Accounts interest, Fishery Rent etc	348,779	267,495	339,253	L - Includes: Interest 2,051 Storm Recovery Grant - T1a 48,082 Storm Recovery Grant - T2a 6,246
	35,631	92,540 ^L	26,105 ^M	
	313,148	174,954	313,148	
Estimated General Fund:				
Open balance at 01.04.2024	140,513	140,513	278,945	M - Includes: Interest 1,500
Rates Raised - 33.25p	313,146	236,582	313,148	
Costs		275		
Special Levy		76,564		
Rates W/Off		(35)		
Net Expenditure	313,148	174,954	313,148	
Storm Recovery/Balances	34,647		30,610	
(Estimated) Closing balance	175,158	278,945	309,555	

Upwell Internal Drainage BoardRate and levy requirements

UNDER SECTION 37 OF THE LAND DRAINAGE ACT 1991, THE APPROPRIATE PROPORTIONS IN WHICH THE NET EXPENDITURE OF THE COMMISSIONERS MUST BE BORNE FOR 2025/2026 IS:-

- a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 75.55%
- b) Proportion to be borne by Special levies issued to Councils:-

Borough of Kings Lynn & Norfolk	14.74%
Fenland District Council	9.71%
	<u>24.45%</u>

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £7,115.

In 2025/2026 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levies would raise £9,418

Revenue balance in hand on 31st March 2024 - £278,945

The estimated net expenditure of £313,148 in 2025/2026, which includes provision for funding for future capital/plant replacement funding is equivalent to:-

- a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 33.25p
- b) a Special levy on the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk of £46,144
and
- c) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £30,420

In 2024/2025 a rate of 33.25p in the £ was raised together with a Special levy of £30,420 on Fenland District Council and £46,144 on Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk.

Members should consider future capital investment and cash flow requirements when setting the rate.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Board

June 2025

Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions:

i) District Labour Fees

The Board gave consideration to the District Labour fees for the Board's employee for 2025/2026.

Miss Ablett advised that the Board had previously resolved to increase the District Foreman's wages in accordance with the Middle Level Commissioners' pay award.

RESOLVED

That the District Foreman's wages for 2025/2026 be increased by 4.15% in accordance with the Middle Level Commissioners' pay award.

ii) District Officers' Fees

- a) The Board gave consideration to the District Officers' fees for 2025/2026.
- b) The Board gave consideration to the expenses payable to the District Officers for 2025/2026.

RESOLVED

- a) That the sum of £4,314 be allowed for the services of the District Officers for 2024/2025 and to be split equally between the District Officers.
- b) That the Board agree that a sum of up to £1,109 for expenses be allowed and split between the District Officers, as necessary.

(NB: The Chairman and Vice Chairman declared a financial interest when this item was discussed.)

iii) Charges for hire of plant when engaged on private work

Consideration was given to whether any revisions were necessary in the Board's charges for hiring plant when engaged on private work (last reviewed – May 2024): -

Flail mower

Present charge - £48 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages etc)

(NB – Travelling time being charged in addition to working time)

(NB: The Chairman declared a financial interest when this item was discussed as he uses the Board's services and Mr Roger Gladwin declared an interest as a Member of Euximoor IDB)

RESOLVED

That no change be made to the hire charges.

That the Board continue to undertake the flail mowing on behalf of Euximoor IDB

iv) Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2025/26

Miss Ablett advised that when considering the rating estimates and the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2024/2025, the Board should note the comments made by the Finance Officer,

and she went through the detail of the report and asked the Board to be sure they were comfortable with the estimates made.

Members discussed the estimates and rate requirements, and it was agreed the Board had to be responsible in view of its depleted funds and future capital requirements.

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 Miss Ablett 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 75.55% and 24.45%.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That a total sum of £313,146 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.
- iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £236,582 and £76,564 respectively.
- iv) That a rate of 33.25p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the district.
- v)
 - a) That a Special levy of £46,144 be made and issued to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk for the purpose of meeting such expenditure
 - b) That a Special levy of £30,420 be made and issued to 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 referred to in resolution iv).
- vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.2173 Middle Level IDB Change

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	16
Meeting:	UPWELL IDB	Subject:	MIDDLE LEVEL IDB CHANGE
Date:	Wednesday 4 th June 2025	Officer Responsible:	Paul Burrows 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 data. 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 <i>eg specific boundaries, differential rates, ringfencing accrued budgets, operational districts, employee and the service delivery model.</i> 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)

Miss Ablett referred to the Clerk's report regarding Middle Level IDB change.

She reported that Boards were being asked to consider the ten questions listed in the agenda regarding change and amalgamation options and to provide feedback via the Chairman by 4th July 2025.

The Chairman gave a brief outline of the meeting held in Ramsey, which both he and the Vice Chairman had attended. He expressed his disappointment that the Board were not represented on the working group. He advised that it was intimated there were sufficient numbers already in the group and therefore no need for

any others. He was extremely disappointed to find out that two individuals were subsequently added to the working group after the meeting had taken place. He added that if he had been made aware of this, he would have put himself forward to represent the Board as he understood at least two other neighbouring boards had representation in the working group.

The Board expressed their concerns regarding the increase in the number of individuals within the small working group at Ramsey. They considered that at least one of those was not truly representative of the Internal Drainage Boards and was lacking the experience required to discuss and make recommendations on a subject of such importance to all Boards within the Middle Level District. It was also considered that this did not help the credibility of the working group,

Miss Ablett advised that the outline design report had previously been sent to all Chairman and Board Members and had been forwarded again on 4th June 2025 for them to review all the various options surrounding amalgamations. Members advised they had not received then information so were unable to comment without being able to review all the options available.

Miss Ablett advised she would feed this back to the Clerk.

She enquired whether the Board would be happy to make a £300 contribution towards the cost of developing the detail design, and this was agreed.

RESOLVED

That Members are unable to comment on the questions raised as they had not received sufficient details of the options available.

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

Post Meeting Minute

Following the above resolution made at the meeting regarding Members giving consideration to and feedback on the ten questions raised, Miss Ablett investigated this further. She advised the Chairman that two emails had been sent to all Chairman and Members of the Boards, one of which was sent on both the 10th of February and 20th May 2025 and the other was a brief outline sent on 23rd July 2024. She further advised the office had also received confirmation of delivery of the emails.

The Chairman has since emailed all Members asking for their comments on the information received.

He reported that one member replied that he had not received anything on either date, two other members found the e-mails, but did not recollect ever viewing them and a response was not received from the remainder of the Board.

The Chairman advised that it appeared the e-mail information was not being received by all Board members and he was unable to comment on why this may be. He added that having spoken to the Chairman of other Boards they had confirmed that this had also been the case for some of the Members who sit on those Boards.

The Chairman considered that maybe a mailshot was required for urgent matters, although this would be more costly.

The Chairman reported that Members had commented on the 'working group' recommendation and were concerned that option one as described to them had been dismissed. It was considered this was the option that helped reduce both the rates and costs for the Upwell IDB. He added that there is support for exploring potential amalgamations and the Board thanks the Middle Level Commissioners for providing the funding to explore this further, however Members do have reservations with the makeup of the working group in order to give a balance from across the district.

B.2174 Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED

That the next meetings of the Board shall be held as follows: -

- i) Wednesday 21st January 2026 at the Lamb & Flag
- ii) Wednesday 10th June 2026 with an inspection, followed by the meeting at the Lamb & Flag and a meal.

The Board requested that Mr Bantoft, the M & E consulting engineer be asked to attend the January 2026 meeting and Miss Ablett reminded Members there would be a charge for his attendance. The Chairman asked for Mr Bantoft to contact him to arrange a Board visit to Bevills Leam pumping station as this visit will determine when the Board meetings in 2026 will commence.

B.2175 Any Other Business

Miss Ablett advised that the Middle Level Commissioners are currently introducing a pension salary sacrifice approach for their employees who are within the NEST pension scheme.

She explained it was hoped that once employees had decided whether to opt in or opt out that a salary sacrifice scheme would be set up and implemented over the next couple of months. She added that once the scheme was up and running, it would then become an option for the Board to offer to its employee.

Miss Ablett advised both the employer, and the employee (in most circumstances) would benefit and if an employee opts-in, then it becomes a change to their contract of employment.

Miss Ablett advised that if the Board choose to offer this to its employee, then further details and forms will be sent to him for his information and consideration.

She enquired whether the Board would wish to offer a pension salary sacrifice option to its employee who is within the NEST Pension scheme.

Members agreed to offer a salary sacrifice option to its employee.

RESOLVED

That once the Middle Level Commissioners scheme was implemented further details are sent to the Board's employee for his information and consideration.

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Chair

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Date