

UPWELL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Upwell Internal Drainage Board
held at the Lamb & Flag, Welney on Wednesday 21st January 2026.

PRESENT

K Goodger (Chair)	P Hartley
P Clabon (Vice Chair)	S Hartley
G Bliss	A Quail
S Calton	J Quail
C Crofts	C Rose
R Gladwin	

Miss Samantha Ablett representing the Clerk and Mr Carl Nunn the District Foreman were in attendance.

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

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

Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from M Fairey, Ms J French, W Gladwin, G Gowler & A Kew.

The Chair welcomed Mr Gary Roberts as a Flood and Coastal Risk Management Advisor to the Environment Agency.

B.2179 Declarations of Interest

The Chair 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 Vice Chair declared an interest in Item 6 in the agenda regarding unconsent works.

B.2180 Confirmation of Minutes**RESOLVED**

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

B.2181 Matters Arising

Miss Ablett reported that it had been considered best to wait until the easement had been completed and all paperwork received before cancelling the electrification and requesting a refund from UK Power

Networks. She advised this was to ensure UK Power Networks had no reason to cancel the easement, in view of it taking so long to be finalised.

Miss Ablett reported the solicitors had been contacted again regarding the easement agreement and it was hoped the agreement would be with the Chair and Vice Chair for signature soon. She added that UK Power Networks had now been contacted requesting the refund

She added the M & E consulting engineer had advised that he had tried to sell the control panel but had not had any interest and considered it would have to be advertised to a wider audience. Unfortunately, with all the works under the Tranche 2b funding needing to be completed by 31st March 2026, he had not yet had the opportunity to do this.

The Chair requested that the M & E consulting engineer make arrangements for the sale of the control panel to be advertised as he knows all the specifics. Miss Ablett advised that any advertisement would not be placed until after March 2026.

B.2182 CCD Strategy

Mr Roberts made a presentation of, Viz:

Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

January 2026 IDB Board Meeting update

Gary Roberts – EAN (Gt Ouse) FCERM Advisor and
CCD Strategy project manager





- Old Bedford Sluice



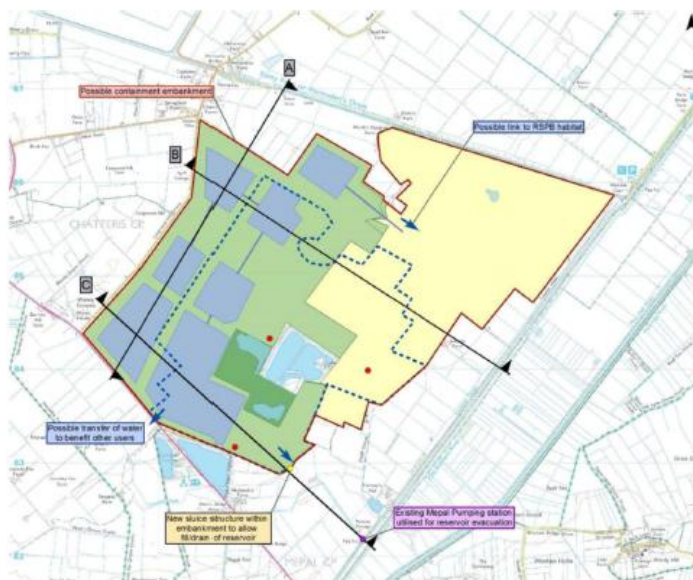
- Welches Dam



- Mepal Pumping Station



- Following the extraction of minerals from the area the vision is to utilise the restored land for storage of water from flood events. When not flooded the land would be available for various land uses. During times of flood the land would be inundated to varying depths depending on the intensity of the flood event.
- Key objective is to create a more efficient and cost:effective water management system and reduce pumping to provide multi-benefits (flood risk; water resources; environmental)



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

Update on recent work – focused work on development of water storage in minerals extraction areas (Block Fen)

- JBA/Motts Consultants (modelling work):
 - updated the Counter Drain/Old Bedford hydraulic model including some detailed representation of Sutton & Mepal IDB (Mepal Pstn and main drain to Crooked Drain). Confirmed volumes for water storage assumptions
 - Groundwater model established for analysis of storage areas (mineral company workings/restoration)
- Mott MacDonald Ltd:
 - Water storage area volume/capacity and engineering options for water storage
 - Land use restoration proposals
 - Water storage “enabling works” – high level options for connecting storage areas
 - Planning strategy
- Consultation and engagement with Tarmac regarding their Western Extension (Phase 2) planning application (2026)

2025/26 (ongoing)

- Commenced master planning work to inform the review C&P M&W Plan update (commencing Jul 2026) – updating the EA vision and principles document
- Ongoing Pre-app consultation and engagement with Tarmac as they progress their planning application through 2026



• Old Bedford Sluice



• Welches Dam

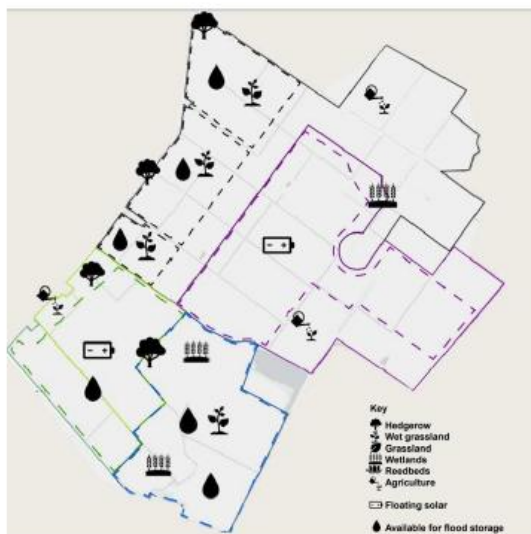


• Mepal Pumping Station

Cranbrook & Counter
Drain FRM Strategy

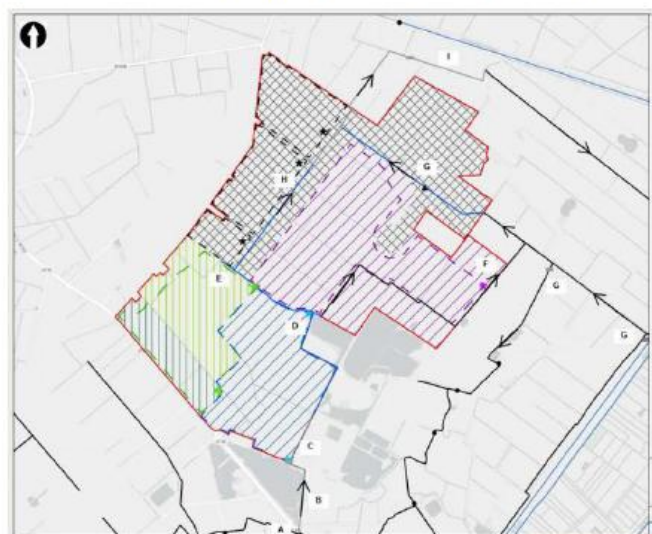


Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy



- Storage options considering functionality and phasing of workings and water management
- Restoration and land use for multi-benefits in addition to FRM.
- Calculator tool for volumes from restoration proposals (contours)

Storage options and after-use

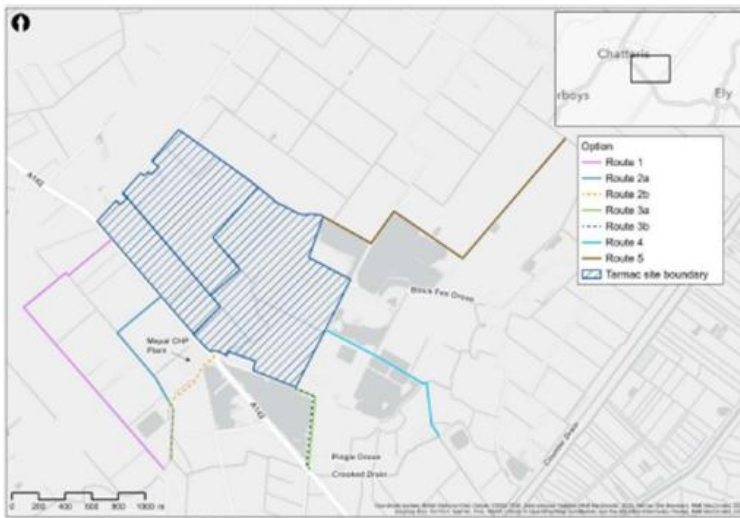


Cranbrook & Counter
Drain FRM Strategy



Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy

Enabling works



- High level options considering connection of water storage areas with IDB system.
- Focused on Tarmac (Phase 1/2) land as most developed in terms of restoration proposals for water storage.
- Appraisal as routes for water in and/or water out of storage areas.
- Links with planning strategy as these may be considered outside of minerals planning approvals as outside of developer "red-line" boundaries.

Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy



Cranbrook/Counter Drain Strategy

Summary updates on strategy preferred option – water storage

- Storage volume needed to provide equivalent capacity of Welches Dam. Key assumption was for storage to provide equivalent to **two 4% (1 in 25) AEP** events in succession for resilience to manage risk of successive wet years. Current design standard of service of Welches Dam equivalent to 4% (1in25) AEP design flood:
 - CCD Strategy 2008 - 10.8 million cubic metres of flood storage capacity for future Climate Change assumptions
 - 2018 update (Motts) - 16 million cubic metres is needed for future Climate Change assumptions
 - 2023 modelling (Motts) – **17.4 million cubic metres** is needed for future Climate Change assumptions
- Current optioneering work (Motts 2024) has been investigating storage volumes provided by the restoration proposals of mineral extraction. To provide productive land use several restoration proposals have been considered. Whilst the assumption for land use is to be compatible with water storage, this has not been tested and only assumed. Therefore, some storage volume is lost to account for the land use and additional benefits;
- The best performing restoration after-use provides approximately **10.1 million cubic metres** of water storage capacity. All restoration options provide the equivalent design capacity for Welches Dam (8.7 million cubic metres) but the resilience/over design storage capacity (i.e. doubling);
- A benefit assessment for additional benefits (non-FCERM) has been carried out (Motts 2024) to identify quantifiable monetary benefits in addition to the FCERM benefits of providing storage equivalent to Welches Dam;

Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

Overview of Preferred Strategic Option (2018 review)

- The PSO (Option 4(c)) is to maintain/improve the current service level in the long term by **developing flood storage solutions** as after use of proposed local mineral abstraction sites.
- Replacing or reducing the reliance on Welches Dam pumping station through introduction of flood storage would provide a more sustainable long term flood risk management solution for the area that can bring wider social and environmental benefits

2025 updates on wider strategy preferred option

- Welches Dam PS will require significant capital investment **earlier than original strategy assumed** (<2035). Current Sustain SOS project (to 2032/33) has funding challenge (PF <100%). **Future capital replacement will affordability challenges under current PF rules;**
- Whilst there is positive communication from minerals companies that mineral extraction and restoration could happen quicker, provision of storage in lieu of Welches Dam will take **longer than originally assumed**.
- Anglian Water's Fens Reservoir introduces opportunities for CCD strategy but increases priority and requirement to deliver alternative catchment management options sooner than planned. Although not by much!
- CCD project is defining a 2040's vision for water and environmental management to incorporate the above with wider catchment interests (Old Bedford, Ouse Washes).
- Therefore, a revision to the original CCD strategy preferred option is required; introducing an interim phase (2040's CC Epoch) to account for above and align with Fens 2100+ adaptive pathways approach.



• Old Bedford Sluice



• Welches Dam

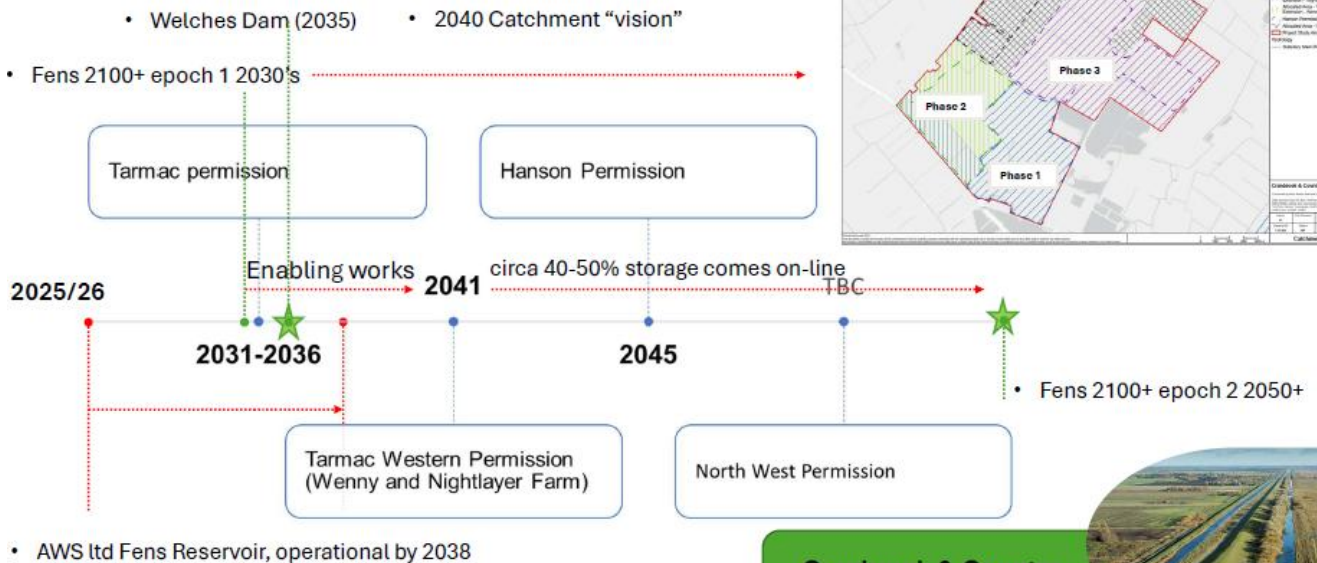


• Mepal Pumping Station



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

Minerals Phasing Timeline

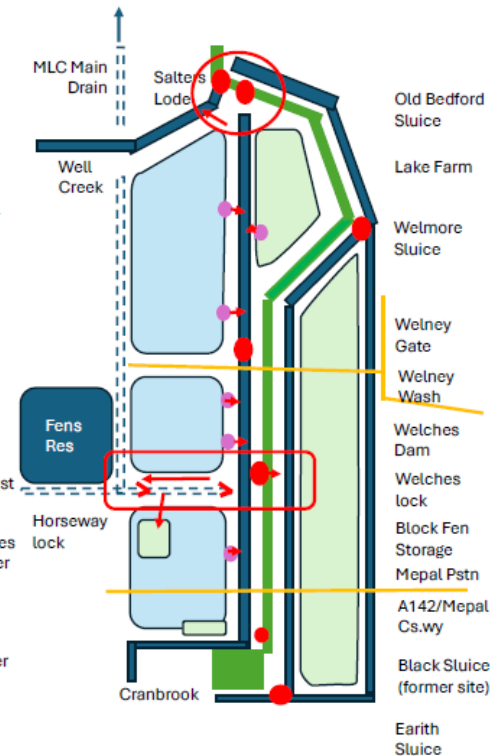


Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy



CCD Strategy – alternative pumped managed system

- Options are being considered in discussion with AP, Ops and MEICA colleagues for managing the system without Welches Dam. Consultation with the 3x IDB's (Sutton & Mepal, Manea & Welney, Upwell) over options has also been carried out (Dec 2024), **with positive feedback.**
- The emerging option includes the following: (Note: this works with/without storage options coming forward)
- Old Bedford Sluice** – current Sustain SOS project has been identified for capital refurbishment within the capital programme (2027-2032 t.b.c). This presents an ideal opportunity to enhance Old Bedford Sluice to repair the Tidal defence (Lock/Sluice) and include pumping capacity. Key assumptions and benefits include:
 - Relocate pumped outfall replace Welches Dam PS (10 cumecs);
 - Improved navigation from Tidal River to Old Bedford – most cost-effective option. Will need to consider practicality of link to MLC navigation at Well Creek (nice to have).
 - Water resources improvements – abstraction from Tidal River for water supply to Old Bedford which currently relies on limited gravity inflow through Sluice. Also deals with siltation issues.
- Old Bedford/Counter Drain channel conveyance.** Major desilting of Old Bedford/Counter Drain channel. Key assumptions and benefits include:
 - Restoration of channel capacity (volume) to enhance storage in system. Restoring “design” channel capacity lost due to siltation and lack of maintenance. **Needed anyway if Welches Dam retained;**
 - Improved environmental habitat management. Lack of maintenance deemed harmful to SAC designated species (Spined Loach) therefore restoration will contribute to managing designated species and improved status; Other WFD and environmental enhancements, protected species mitigation measures;
 - Maintained navigation along Old Bedford river
 - Improved water resources conveyance (summer water level management - interim & linked to longer term water storage proposals
- Options compared with retaining Welches Dam Pumping Station and discharge to Ouse Washes**



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

Work planned going forward (2026 onwards)

- CCD strategy (water storage):
 - Master planning and EA Water Storage “Principles” document update;
 - Consultation with Tarmac;
 - leading to C&P MW Plan review (commencing July-2026).
- Old Bedford Sluice & Pumping Station project Business Case – 2026/27 to 2027/28;
- Counter Drain/Old Bedford Restoration project Business Case – 2026/27 to 2027/28;
- Increase consultation & engagement with IDBs over:
 - Water storage proposals and system changes.
 - Linking with IDB consultations over minerals planning applications (i.e. Tarmac) and “Enabling Works”



• Old Bedford Sluice



• Welches Dam



• Mepal Pumping Station

**Cranbrook & Counter
Drain FRM Strategy**



Cranbrook & Counter Drain FRM Strategy

Thank You

Any Questions?



B.2183 Constitution & Membership

The Board considered the report and noted the Election term ending 31st October 2026.

B.2184 Clerk's Report

Miss Ablett provided a verbal report:

IDB Fund

2025/26 has begun how 2024/25 ended with delivery being the primary focus. We were successful in securing approximately £4.5m of grant for a number of IDB Fund (Tranche 2b) submissions and the administration and delivery of these commitments has been a primary focus particular for staff in M&E, Operations, Environment & Ecology and Finance, meaning some 'business as usual' activity has been impacted:

- Mobile Pumps – Phase 2 - £1.2m
- St Germans Pumping Station Resilience Phase 2 - £1m
- Bevill's Pond Resilience - £0.3m (MLC and Sawtry IDB)
- Asset Resilience – Pumps and Channels - £2m (MLC and IDBs)

This fund, coming with less constraints than FCRM grant-in-aid, is enabling us to think and invest differently. In my view we need to change gear in terms of our business model and philosophy to become more commercially minded within the boundaries of a not-for-profit public authority. Whilst there remains work to do within our improvement and modernisation journey, our organisational foundations are now in a much healthier position to build from, albeit our base capacity and capability are a constraint to what needs to be,

and could be, achieved. We will need to identify and nurture partnerships not only with traditional partners but with the innovators within our local agricultural and the development sectors.

Data Provision

We are receiving an increasing number of data requests from a variety of sources. These can be complex and time consuming to service, sometimes for projects or purposes with little to no direct benefit to the Commissioners and our administered IDBs (where we act as their data controller).

To better protect our interests, we have developed and are now using a formal data sharing agreement with third parties. We will introduce a cost recovery approach to servicing such requests.

Electricity Service

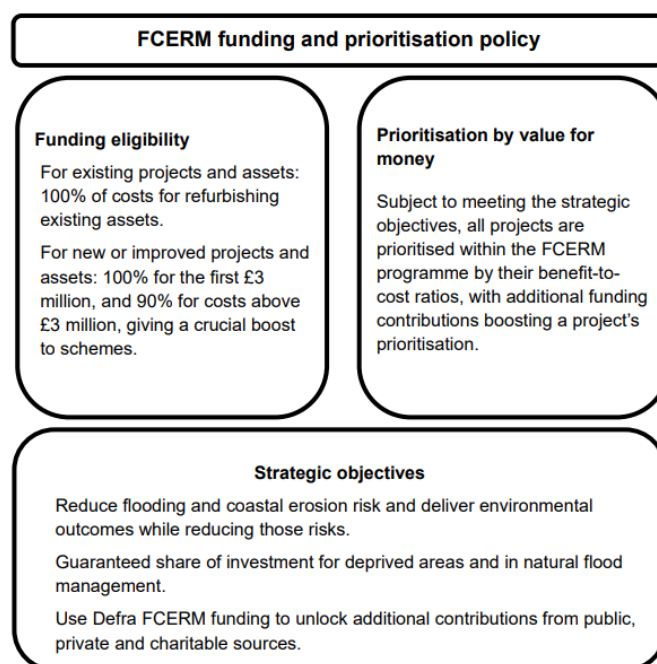
The 12-month group (MLC and IDBs) contract with EDF Energy ceased on 30th September 2025. This contract was facilitated by brokers GEAB.

A sub-Committee of MLC Board Members and IDB Chairman reviewed options alongside MLC staff. We are now in contact with British Gas and are self-managing this within the Finance team for the 12-months to 30th September 2026.

Defra Flood Funding Policy

Following consultation earlier in the year, Defra has finalised its new funding policy and responded to the consultation. We provided and published a comprehensive response.

This policy is for capital flood grant and goes live from 1st April 2026.



Key points for MLC and IDBs:

- a) Refurbishment is a significant fix on an asset that can't be addressed by routine maintenance alone. Further guidance is expected on this aspect.
- b) When applying for Defra FCERM funding for refurbishment of existing assets, asset owners will need to demonstrate that they have undertaken whole life asset management and routine maintenance.

- c) As partnership contributions increase, the amount of Defra FCERM funding needed decreases, leading to higher project prioritisation. The more significant the partnership contribution, the larger the likelihood of boosting prioritisation.
- d) The '2012' rule has been removed meaning new development can be included within benefit assessments. We will commission an economic and benefits refresh across the Middle Level to update our base information.
- e) The need to demonstrate a reduction in flood risk band as a result of works has been removed.
- f) Defra acknowledge concerns from other risk management authorities that they are at a disadvantage compared to the Environment Agency. The policy states that all risk management authorities should have equal access to FCERM funding.

IDB Funding & Costs Research

A joint Defra and MHCLG IDB funding and costs research project is now underway. It is being led by ICF, a consultancy with expertise in economic and financial analysis, particularly in evaluating the costs and benefits of environmental and regulatory policies in the water and land use sector. Supporting ICF is Logika, a consultancy specialising in flood risk management, drainage, and sustainable development and valuable experience from the water sector. The project is scheduled to conclude by July 2026.

The overarching goal of the project is to conduct a comprehensive review of IDBs' operations, focusing on financial efficiency and value for money, with the aim of assessing whether changes are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of IDBs. The research is structured around three core objectives:

1. Funding and Financial Review: To analyse IDB funding mechanisms, operational costs and financial pressures over the past decade and explore future funding options.
2. Benefit Evaluation: To assess the economic and social value of IDBs' work, both locally and nationally.
3. Data Modernisation: To explore how the annual IDB1 Form can be improved and modernised for better data collection and reporting.

The project will include:

- an evidence review,
- analysis of financial information and IDB1 reports,
- interviews with selected IDBs and stakeholders,
- an IDB survey to identify any gaps in the data, and
- case studies.

We have been in touch with the consultants leading the work and provided them with information to get them started. Given we collectively represent c25% of the IDB sector nationally, we will, in one way shape or form, inform their results and associated recommendations for change. Whilst this research is an opportunity to highlight and influence much needed policy change for collective benefit, there is equally the likelihood that it will draw out some uncomfortable truths.

In September we hosted the Local Delivery & Rural Floods Policy Team from Defra. We took them on a whistlestop tour from Stanground Lock through the Middle Level to St Germans Pumping Station and used the time and the backdrop to discuss and showcase our system and breadth of water management operations.

We highlighted the 'big ticket' areas of efficiency we are driving at the MLC, including how we are using the governments 'IDB Fund' wisely. We discussed the strengths and successes in how we work across the Middle

Level but also the areas of policy and associated financing that are constraining our collective ability to plan and be as efficient and as effective as possible in a world that's changing, due largely to factors beyond our control.

One of the key issues the research will be assessing is the impact that special levies to IDBs is having on Local Authorities. This issue is being promoted by a Local Government Association 'IDB Levy Special Interest Group'.

Around 40 councils across England are working together to lobby the Government for reform to the funding system that supports the vital work of Internal Drainage Boards. IDBs are primarily funded through drainage rates charged directly on the occupiers of agricultural land within each drainage district and a special levy on district and unitary councils on behalf of the non-agricultural land within each district. Each council primarily funds the cost of the special levy through a combination of central government grants, their share of business rates and revenue from council tax levied on local properties. Due to rising costs in such things as electricity that power the pumping stations at times of flooding and sustained heavy rain, the special levy amount has been increasingly significantly in recent years.

On the evening of Tuesday 2nd September 2025 there was a parliamentary meeting of the LGA's IDB Levy Special Interest Group. The meeting was attended by the leaders and portfolio holders from a number of special levy paying local authorities at the House of Commons alongside several members of parliament. ADA and IDBs were also represented by Robert Caudwell, Michael Sly, Daniel Withnall (Black Sluice IDB), and Paul Burrows (Middle Level Commissioners).

Reflecting on the meeting within the ADA Gazette, Paul Burrows said:

"It's pleasing that Local Authorities and MPs appreciate the criticality of the work the Internal Drainage Board sector play in enabling prosperous local communities. After all, every other Council service relies on keeping homes, business, land and infrastructure dry. We need to be mindful of potential unintended consequences within any call for funding reform, particularly the special levies that Councils raise on our behalf. It is important that the IDB Costs & Funding Research commissioned by Defra gets under the skin of the issues and makes considered and well-evaluated recommendations."

IDB1

There is another step-change in reporting expectations on us all both in terms of financial and non-financial information we provide annually to Defra within the 2024/25 IDB1. This will take additional time to pull together and is an indication as to the increased expectations Government have on us in terms of governance and responsibilities.

Whilst we can derive the majority of the financial and non-financial information on behalf of our administered IDBs, there are questions where we require information from the Boards directly. To assist Sam Ablett in preparing the form for return, please by 1st January 2026 can each Chairman respond with information covering questions:

26 for IDBs that don't use Morgan Lakey for their Operational services

27 for IDBs that don't use Morgan Lakey for their Operational services

32 -36 The H&S questions

38 – 40 The training and professional development questions

67- 75 The public engagement questions

Unconsented Works

Miss Ablett reported It had been brought to the Middle Level Commissioners' attention that the Vice Chair did not complete the necessary consent application for the pipework for 4 crossings across the Board's drain when his reservoir was being constructed. She added the Vice Chair should have been aware of this and as such the matter could result in the Vice Chair being removed from the Board, as documented in the Board's Code of Conduct.

Miss Ablett reported the matter had been discussed with the Vice Chair, who had apologised and provided an explanation as to how this oversight came about. She advised that in view of this and the likelihood that consent would have been granted, the Middle Level Commissioners had recommended that no further action be taken regarding the removal of the Vice Chair from the Board.

Miss Ablett advised the work would remain unconsented as this removed the Board setting a precedent for granting consents retrospectively.

She reported the Vice Chair had attended the Chair's meeting so was aware of the enforcement procedures the Middle Level Commissioners has in place. She added that these procedures have proven successful in recovering sums for both Boards and the Commissioners, however it was very difficult to enforce matters if consents were granted retrospectively.

She advised that granting consent retrospectively could have greater implications going forward should any developers become aware of this.

Miss Ablett explained the Vice Chair would have all the risks attached to the unconsented works, should any problems arise in the future, but as the Board had been made aware of the installation of the pipes they now had the responsibility to ensure the District Foreman and any contractors were also advised of these when undertaking any works. If any damage was caused to the pipes due to negligence this would be a matter for the Board and would be at their expense.

The Vice Chair reported for clarity that the reservoir itself had full consent from the Middle Level Commissioners, the EA had granted an irrigation licence, and he had employed an agent to deal with all matters relating to the project. The problem came about when the ring main was installed for the four crossings over the Board's drain. Unfortunately, the four pipes were installed in the time it was taking the agent to complete the necessary paperwork.

Miss Ablett enquired whether members were happy to approve the recommendations made by the Middle Level Commissioners in that the works remain unconsented and the Vice Chair is not removed from the Board.

Members considered the recommendations made to be the best course of action.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations made by the Middle Level Commissioners be approved.

B.2185 Environment Officers' Report

Miss Ablett provided a verbal report:

- 1) The launch of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire (LNRS), which formally sets the priorities for nature conservation across our region, was significantly delayed in 2025 but was finally published on the 23rd December. IDBs have a statutory duty to have regard for the objectives of the LNRS so the IDB Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) are necessarily centred around the priorities the

LNRS. The final drafts of the BAPS are therefore being drafted and will be available for review very soon.

- 2) The Old Croft River is a real ecological asset for the Board and should be a focus of efforts for enhancements projects in the BAP. Suggestions for projects to achieve this will be sought from the Board in the coming weeks.
- 3) The draft Environmental Impact Assessment for the penstock opposite Delph House is now complete and will be issued for Board approval prior to publication for 30-day public consultation.
- 4) It is noted that the standard operating procedure for desilting and vegetation management have been provided to the current contractor which is great. Please note that adherence to SOPS is mandatory for all those working for and on behalf of the IDB.
- 5) We expect to be surveying some scrub around a badger sett with a view to a clearance plan soon and await the ESR to formally instruct the work.
- 6) From April 2026, the standard Environmental Performance Indicators will be launched consistent way. This will help to ensure that any areas of environmental risk are flagged promptly and the successes of the Board in achieving biodiversity enhancements are recognised. The following deliverables / actions are some of those that may form part of the assessment:
 - A current channel categorisation map and maintenance plan (flail mowing and desilting), with reasoning completed, for review and approval at the Board meeting
 - From 2027, the previous years' maintenance record available for review
 - The annual schedule of works reviewed by the Ecol. Dept. and survey requirements / mitigations highlighted ahead of board Approval / ESRs submitted
 - Biodiversity budget set and defined as part of Board meeting
 - Attendance at a biodiversity training / information day each year
 - Environmental review completed including BAP review with 75% or more objectives on target for completion on time
 - No net loss of open watercourse
- 7) We look forward to meeting with the Chair, Vice Chair and DO to discuss the above in the next few weeks
- 8) Please look out for the first refreshed edition of "Life on the Edge" environmental newsletter for IDBs which is in planning and will be published in March and October each year.
- 9) A review of Environmental and waste permits is required and will be planned with the Chair and VC in the coming months.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Report be approved.

B.2186 Consulting Engineers' Reports

The Board considered the reports of the Consulting Engineers.

Enforcement and Compliance Overview

Miss Ablett referred to the Chief Engineer's comments regarding the Middle Level Commissioners' enforcement and compliance overview.

She advised the Chief Engineer had recommended that the Board authorise the Chair and Vice Chair to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board, having taken advice from Middle Level Commissioner officers. She added it was also recommended that the Chair and Vice Chair would engage other Board members as they saw appropriate and determine whether a Special Meeting of the Board would be needed on a risk and complexity basis.

Miss Ablett enquired whether Members would approve the Chief Engineer's recommendation.

Members approved the recommendations made by the Chief Engineer and authorised the Chair and Vice Chair to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board.

Capital Works

Miss Ablett referred to the Chief Engineer's comments relating to capital work and the proposed replacement of control panels at both Cock Fen and Nordelph pumping stations, for which £50,000 had been allocated in the Environment Agency's capital programme for 2025-2026.

She advised that a business case was being completed to get the funding approved, but there was a high risk that the approval may delay the delivery of works and added that EA approval was anticipated early this year.

Miss Ablett enquired whether the Board would approve this work starting ahead of receiving grant approval so that Consulting Engineers could get orders placed but noting that in the unlikely event that the funding application was not successful, the Board would need to fund the work.

Mr Bliss hoped that if the M & E consulting engineer was able to sell the control panel this would provide the Board with further funds and the Board still had funds from the public works loan. He considered the Board should go ahead with the works.

The Chair advised that as the Board was not electrifying Cock Fen pumping station and if a new diesel engine was installed the Board would need to change the control panel. He suggested that if the Board agree to the works commencing, before approval for the grant is received, that the M & E consulting engineer should be asked to obtain an updated quote to ensure the costs do not significantly exceed the £50,000.

Members agreed this was the best course of action.

Mechanical & Electrical (M&E)

Miss Ablett referred to the M & E consulting engineer's report and his comments regarding the age of the pumping stations, pumps and control panels, which gives rise to concerns regarding reliability.

She reminded the Board that over the past couple of years the Engineer had been compiling and verifying pumping station key dates to allow easier identification of equipment age and the need for refurbishment to assist in developing an investment plan for asset refurbishment or replacement.

Miss Ablett drew the Board's attention to the key health indicators and the critical area of concern being the pumps, some of which range from 13 to 55 years old with last refurbishments ranging from 10 to 19 years ago.

She reported that the M & E consulting engineer strongly advises the Board to consider the development of a pump refurbishment/replacement plan for the pumps that are overdue refurbishment and added having a plan in place helps to secure further grant funding when it is available.

The Chair reported that he had discussed a proposed refurbishment plan with the Vice Chair and they considered it would be appropriate for the Board to develop a plan to try and refurbish one pump a year.

He advised that based on the M & E consulting engineer's report the Board should refurbish pump 2 at Bedlam Bridge pumping station this coming year and consider refurbishing the pump at either Nordelph or Upwell Fen pumping station next year. He added that by the next meeting the Board will have some idea of the costs involved to help develop a plan.

Miss Ablett referred to the M & E consulting engineer's comments relating to each of the pumping stations and of the issues he considers need addressing.

She advised the Board that the Commissioners' M & E department is extremely busy delivering all the Tranche 2b works on behalf of the IDB's and the Commissioners so it was unlikely any of the issues raised would be undertaken until the Spring, at the earliest, even if the Board wished to proceed.

Miss Ablett also referred to the problems with the electricity meter at Nordelph pumping station, which has been broken for over ten years and which energy suppliers were unable to fix due to amperage requirements. She reported this may be resulting in excessive electricity charges and it appears the only way this could be rectified was by installing a current transformer cabinet, which would be at a cost to the Board.

She added that she had spoken with the M & E consulting engineer regarding the works that he considers necessary at the pumping stations, together with the cost of a current transformer cabinet and he will update his report for the June meeting so works can be discussed in detail, if that is acceptable to Members.

Miss Ablett enquired whether the Board wished for the M & E consulting engineer to provide the details required for all M & E works for consideration at a meeting of the Board's Finance Committee to be arranged in May, in advance of the meeting in June. Members agreed this would be the best course of action.

RESOLVED

That the reports be approved.

That the Chair and Vice Chair be authorised to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board.

That the M & E consulting engineer provide the following information to be discussed at the Board's next finance committee meeting: (date to be arranged)

- a) An updated cost of the control panels at Cock Fen pump 2 at Nordelph pumping stations
- b) An estimate of the cost of refurbishing Bedlam Bridge pumping station and an estimate of all the other pumps at the other pumping stations, to allow a realistic plan to be developed
- c) An estimate for the installation of a current transformer cabinet at Nordelph pumping station
- d) An estimate of the costs relating to the recommendations for the repairs at Upwell Fen, Cock Fen and Nordelph pumping stations, shown in this his report

That a pump refurbishment plan be developed for the pumps that are overdue refurbishment. Starting with the pump at Bedlam Bridge pumping station and then with the hope of refurbishing one pump each year

That the Board proceed with the Control Panel replacements at Cock Fen and Nordelph pumping stations, subject to the costs not significantly exceeding the £50,000 allocated, accepting risk that GiA funding may not be awarded.

B.2187 Health & Safety

The Chair reported that a health and safety visit by AW Safety Ltd, had taken place the previous day and the District Foreman had taken the inspector around the district. He added that he was aware the signage was still outstanding and he had previously been advised by COPE Safety Management that the Middle Level Commissioners were dealing with this. He added that he was waiting for the report from the recent visit and assured the Board that, with their approval, any matters raised that required addressing would be dealt with.

Members agreed for the Chair to take any necessary action.

Miss Ablett advised she would make enquiries regarding the signage.

B.2188 District Foreman's Report

The Board noted and approved the District Foreman's Report.

The Chair reported that the District Foreman was completing monthly timesheets for the Middle Level Commissioners as his salary was now paid monthly, but he had asked him to continue preparing weekly reports for both him and the Vice Chair information and approval.

B.2189 Finance Committee Report

The Chair reported there had been no committee meeting since the last Board meeting.

B.2190 Finance ReportFinance officer's review and key messages

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

Budget Monitoring

The Board considered and approved the Budget Monitoring forecast up to 31st March 2026.

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions:District Labour Fee

Miss Ablett reported this item was usually discussed at the summer meeting but as it related to the year from April 2026 to March 2027, she considered it better to be discussed at the winter meeting as this would prevent payment from having to be back dated.

The Board gave consideration to the District Labour fees for the Board's employee for 2026/2027.

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. Mr Gladwin considered the board should continue MLC pay award, this was agreed by all the members.

RESOLVED

That the District Foreman's wages for 2026/2027 be increased in accordance with the Middle Level Commissioners' pay award.

ADA subscription

Miss Ablett reported that ADA had increased the subscription by 5% for 2026, from £1,039 to £1,091. She advised the Chair had approved the payment and enquired whether Members were in agreement with the Chair's actions.

RESOLVED

That the Chair's actions regarding payment of the increased ADA subscription for 2026 be approved.

Precept

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

The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2025. This is offset by a contribution received by Middle Level Commissioners, the nett amount paid in 2024/2025 was £44,139.

The precept for 2023/2024 was £60,520.59.

B.2191 Date of next MeetingRESOLVED

That next Meeting of the Board be held on Wednesday 10th June 2026 at the Lamb & Flag, Welney.

2.45pm Inspection

5.30pm Meeting

7pm Meal

B.2192 Any Other Business

Mr Paul Hartley advised that he had attended the meeting in July and asked for this to be recorded.

That a letter of thanks for all her work on behalf of the Board be sent to Polly Tombleson of the Middle Level Commissioners.

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Chair

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Date