

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	NEEDHAM & LADDUS IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Tuesday 14th April 2026	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Authorise the Chairman and Vice Chairman to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board with advice form MLC.**
- B. The Board to confirm if it wishes to consider submitting projects for inclusion in the FCERM Investment Programme (from July 2026)**

1. Enforcement & Compliance Overview

Our Enforcement and Compliance Officers Dave Coles and Tony Payne joined us on the 23 June 2025 as a job share. They are currently investigating cases across 17 boards plus Middle Level Commissioners, including:

- 47 active enforcement cases,
- 23 surface water or surface water and foul discharges,
- 24 byelaw cases.

Cases already concluded:

- Eight cases in the last two months including trespass, unlicensed moorings, unauthorised structures and encroachment,
- Six major developments have been referred to Technical Services following enforcement action, as consent applications for outstanding discharge consents.

In September and October, they were successful in recovering more than £70,000 of historic outstanding drainage charges for three developments across two boards and the MLC.

It is recommended that the Board authorise the Chairman and Vice Chairman to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board, having taken advice from MLC Officers. They will engage other Board Members as they see appropriate and determine whether a Special Meeting of the Board is needed on a risk and complexity basis.

2. Summary of Key Planning Issues

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

3. Technical Services Overview

A new Senior Planning & Consenting Officer, Emma Ryder, joined the team at the beginning of March. She had been working for us on a consultancy basis since November last year and she has extensive experience in flood risk, economics and sustainable drainage. Emma is the first appointment in an

ongoing recruitment campaign to better manage the increased planning and consenting workload resulting from new development across the Middle Level.

4. IDB Recovery Fund T2B

Following the initial, unsuccessful bid for funding, the Environment Agency subsequently awarded funding for the 'Asset Resilience Pumps & Channels' package in June 2025. These works are due for completion by March 2026.

Works being delivered for this district include culvert enlargement works.

5. Capital Programme

New FCERM grant funding guidance

The Government published new FCERM funding guidance on 3 March 2026.

To be eligible for funding a project must deliver strategic objectives and government policy. Governments' objectives most relevant to IDBs include:

- value for money (Net Present Value)
- reducing flood risk
- focusing on deprived areas
- prioritising projects with contributions from others (this would include funding provide by IDBs themselves)
- a percentage investment in Natural Flood Management (NFM) across the programme

Project types that are eligible for grant funding include:

- refurbishing or replacing existing assets
- building new assets
- NFM projects
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Asset Refurbishment Projects

Asset refurbishment is a significant renewal to one or more components in an existing asset that is not covered by routine maintenance.

It includes work to mitigate for the loss of asset performance. This covers issues that asset maintenance cannot manage and that would be significant and permanent if not fixed.

It does not include asset replacement projects where an existing asset at the end of its life is replaced with another like for like asset which sustains the standard of service.

Under the 2025 FCERM funding policy existing FCERM assets are eligible for 100% of funding for refurbishment.

New or Improved Asset Projects

Projects that are not refurbishment are eligible for 100% for the first £3 million, and 90% for costs above £3 million.

These include:

- projects replacing existing assets with a like for like replacement
- projects building new or improved assets
- projects with combined asset interventions

Projects cannot be artificially split into smaller components to fall below the £3 million fully funded threshold.

Applying for funding

It should be noted that there will be more projects that are eligible for investment than funding available. Projects will need to be prioritised to meet government targets and achieve best value for money.

Therefore, it is recommended that should the Board wish to apply for FCERM grant funding, they. This is similar to the funding rules that were in place prior to 2011 when IDBs only received 45% of project costs.

Should the Board wish to submit a new project to be considered for funding, the first step is to collate relevant cost and benefit data to submit to the Environment Agency from 1 July 2026. This requires collating costs and benefits and other relevant data required by the EA in order to determine a project's eligibility and prioritise the programme. The Consulting Engineer can provide resources to do this and this will be recharged to the Board.

If a project already appears on the FCERM investment programme with an allocation for future years, an application for grant funding approval/business case will need to be submitted. The Consulting Engineer can provide resources to do this.

Timescales

The Consulting Engineer currently has limited resources to develop and deliver projects, although recruitment is currently in progress to address this. The likely timescales for project delivery are:

- submit for funding consideration July 2026 onwards
- prepare and submit applications for subsequent funding approval
- delivery 2027/28 onwards if grant is allocated

The Consulting Engineer will prioritise workload based primarily on Key Health Indicators.

The Board is asked to confirm if it wishes to:

- **progress this project in future years**
- **secure future grant-in aid**
- **contribute towards funding the project, and**
- **to instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.**

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield

Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: List of applications since last meeting

Appendix 2: Anglian Water Strategic Pipeline Alliance

Appendix 3: Operational Services Report

There have been 14 planning applications responded to since the last meeting.

There have been 4 applications for Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) granted since the last meeting

There have been 3 infiltration device applications granted since the last meeting.

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

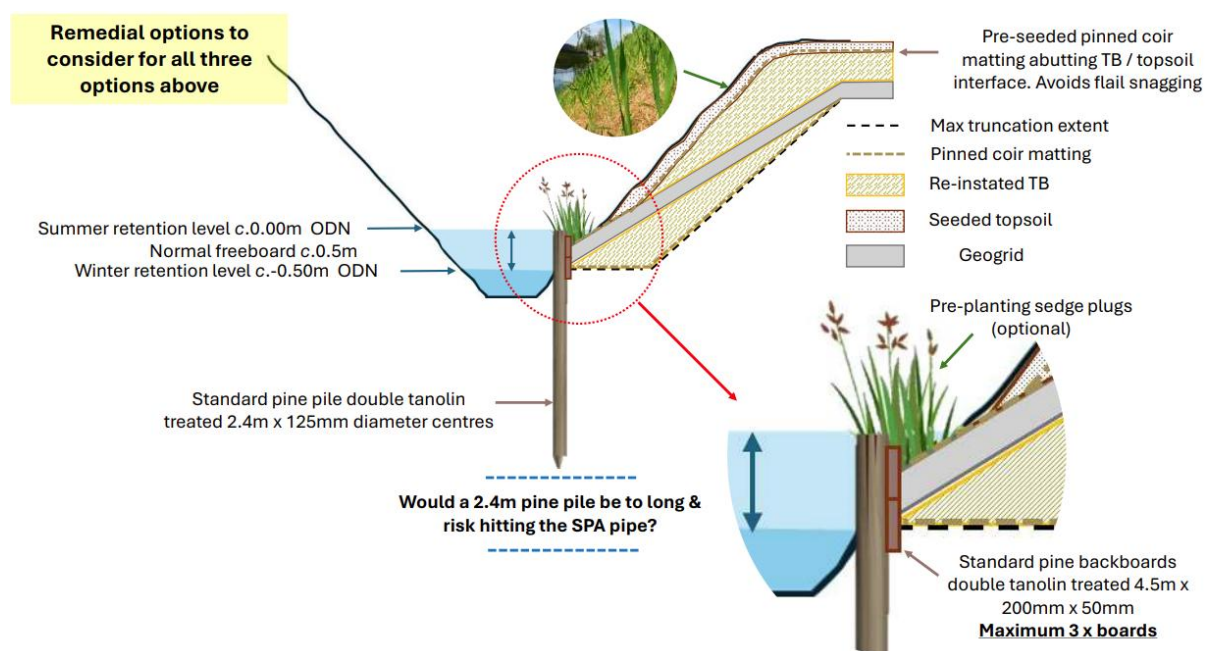
Grantham to Bexwell potable water supply Pipeline in the Needham Field/Molls Drove/Bramble Lane area – Anglian Water Services Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 380, 385 & 397)

Anglian Water (AW) Strategic Pipeline Alliance (SPA):

In spring 2025, ecologists on behalf of Anglian Water began a rigorous regime to clear vegetation from riparian and Board drains to deter water vole populations along the easement route. A subcontractor using heavy plant was also engaged in scraping vegetation from bank batters to do the same. However, while this work was supervised by ecologists, there were several instances of plant being operated heavy handedly, resulting in 0.25-1m of bank batter being removed. This action was noticed by the Chairman and reported to MLC who conducted a thorough investigation.

As this action was against the agreed water vole eviction licensing conditions AW had secured with Natural England, several on-site meetings ensued over the dry summer accompanied by the Chair and Vice Chair to determine the cause and come up with a remedial strategy for AW to restore these watercourses to a fit state once pipe laying works were completed.

Surface geology is Terrington Beds, consisting of former reclaimed saltmarsh, which is notoriously difficult to work with when dry and particularly so when wet, whereby it becomes 'running silt'. After fervent discussion and meetings, a proposed solution has provisionally been agreed which an AW contractor under close supervision will hopefully remedy in summer 2026. This involves using piles [avoiding the new pipe] and back boards in conjunction with soil covered pre-seeded coir matting to stem erosion as per below:



Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	NEEDHAM & LADDUS DDC	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES
Date:	Tuesday 14 th April 2026	Officer Responsible:	Morgan Lakey

1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance

- 1.1 The weed control and drain maintenance strategy generally accorded with the programme approved by the Chair and Vice-chair at the last annual summer inspection.

Following a successful bid for funding from the Government Tranche 2 scheme, the 600mm culvert at Point 50, was replaced with a twin-wall plastic 1200mm pipe and new concrete bagged headwalls. This will improve the water conveyance for the upstream drains that receive water from the ever-growing Outwell village. Also preventing water being held up and future confidence in the integrity of the vitally important culvert within the Board's system.

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



Point 50, road crossing & numerous services exposed during works



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

A recent inspection of the Board's drains revealed the majority are in a good condition and being maintained to a high standard. Due to last year's successful herbicide and programmed machine cleansing works, there is little sign of vegetation growth. Sporadic patches of filamentous algae (Cott) are evident in some of the Laddus Drove drains and a second inspection will be carried out post-harvest and any required works included in the ensuing years maintenance programme.

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

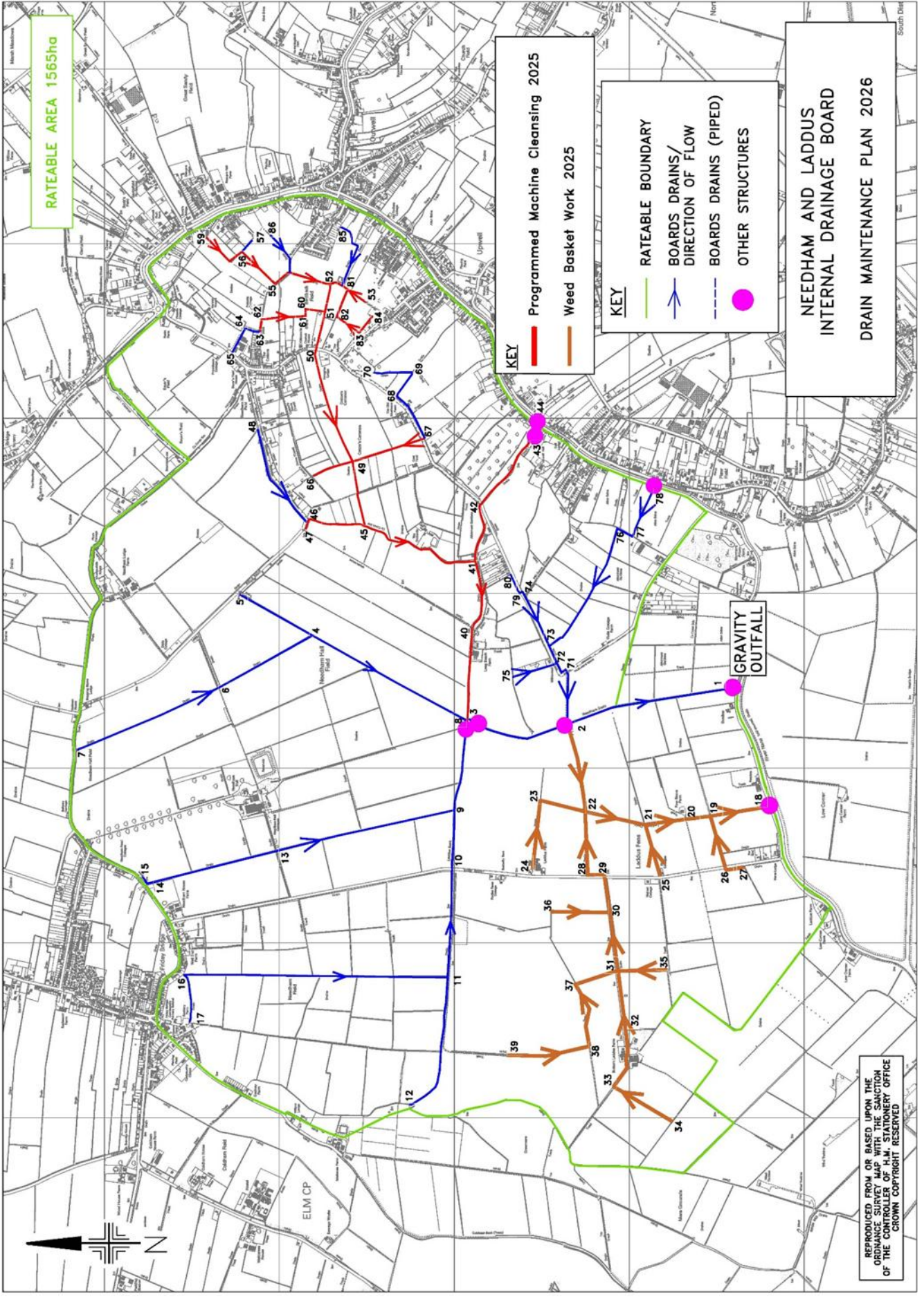
Harrison Agricultural Contractors have indicated that they are available to undertake the Board's flail mowing and tractor mounted bucket requirements for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing District drains has been included within the estimate.

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

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

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

Author Name: Morgan Lakey
Role: Operations Manager



RATEABLE AREA 1565ha

KEY

- Programmed Machine Cleansing 2025
- Weed Basket Work 2025

KEY

- RATEABLE BOUNDARY
- BOARDS DRAINS / DIRECTION OF FLOW
- BOARDS DRAINS (PIPED)
- OTHER STRUCTURES

NEEDHAM AND LADDUS
INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
DRAIN MAINTENANCE PLAN 2026

GRAVITY
OUTFALL

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ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP WITH THE SANCTION
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