MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Contact: Gemma Ashby, Senior Business Support Officer

Email: enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk

Telephone: DD (01354) 699377

Administered by:

30th April 2026

Dear Board Members

<u>Upcoming meeting of the Board</u>
<u>Thursday 7th May 2026</u>

Please find overleaf the agenda for the meeting of the Board to be hosted at the Middle Level Offices, PE15 0AH at 7pm on Thursday 7th May 2026.

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

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

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

Yours truly

P BURROWS, FCIWEM C.WEM CEnv

Clerk to the Board

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Thursday 7th May 2026 – 7pm
Middle Level Offices, PE15 0AH

Agenda:

Item No	*Topic*	*Format*	*Lead*
1	Welcome & Apologies	Verbal	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	Verbal	Chair
3	Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Pages 3 - 14	Chair
4	Constitution & Membership	Pages 15 - 17	Clerk
5	Clerk's Report	Pages 18 - 22	Clerk
6	Environment Officer's Report	Pages 23 - 24	Clerk
7	Chairman's Items	Verbal	Chair
8	Consulting Engineer's Reports, including:	Pages 25 - 37	Clerk or Engineer
9	Health & Safety	Pages 38 - 45	Chair
10	District Officer's Report	Verbal	DO
11	Governance • Audit Return for 2024/2025 • Auditors report for 2024/2025	Pages 46 - 48 Pages 49 - 53	Clerk
12	Finance Report: looking back • Payments 2025 • Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2025/2026	Pages 54 - 55 Page 56 Pages 57 - 61	Clerk
13	Finance Report: looking forward • Rating Estimates for 2026/2027 • Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements or 2026/2027	Pages 62 - 63 Pages 64 Pages 65	Clerk
15	Date of Next Meeting Thursday 6th May 2027 – 7pm	Verbal	Chair
16	Any other business	Verbal	Chair

(NB: If required for any agenda item:

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

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

At a Meeting of the March Third District Drainage Commissioners
Held at the Middle Level Offices, March on 21st May 2025.

PRESENT

M Wilkinson (Chair)	A Miscandlon
A Dunham	T Taylor
Ms J French	J Pollington

Mrs Ruth Martin (Lead Clerk) representing the Clerk and Mr Morgan Lakey (Operations Engineer) representing the Consulting Engineers were in attendance.

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from Mr M H Deptford.

C.1248 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.

Mr Wilkinson declared an interest in District Officers matters.

Mrs French, Mr Taylor and Mr Miscandlon declared an interest in matters involving Fenland District Council.

Mr Miscandlon declared an interest in matters concerning the Middle Level Commissioners as Middle Level Board members.

C.1249 Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 9th May 2024 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

C.1250 Matters Arising

None raised

C.1251 Constitution & Membership

Vacancies and Elections

The Chair welcomed Mr Pollington to the Board, and Mrs Martin advised that his appointment had filled one of the vacancies on the Board and that one vacancy remained. The Chair remarked that most of the landowners in the area are already on numerous Boards. Mrs Martin advised that as this is a Board of District Drainage Commissioners, there is wider scope in people eligible to become Board members. The Board agreed to consider any other potential members and make enquiries regarding interest in sitting on the Board.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Board agreed that Mr Wilkinson be appointed as Chairman of the Commissioners. This was proposed by Mrs French and seconded by Mr Miscandlon.

The Board agreed that Mr M Deptford be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Commissioners. This was proposed by Mr Wilkinson and seconded by Mr Miscandlon.

The Board agreed that Mr Wilkinson be appoint as District Officer of the Commissioners.

RESOLVED

That Mr Wilkinson be appointed as Chairman of the Commissioners.
That Mr Deptford be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Commissioners.
That Mr Wilkinson be appointed as District Officer of the Commissioners.

Training

Mrs Martin advised that the updated version of the ADA Good Governance Guide has now been printed and copies were handed to Board members. She advised that it is not yet clear what supporting training material will follow, but that the original training videos are still available to view.

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

C.1252 Clerk's Report

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

Planning and Consenting Charging Model

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

Mrs French commented that developers are happy to pay the fees if they know what they are spending and welcomed the move.

The Board expressed their satisfaction with the model.

Highland Water and IDB Precept

Mrs Martin outlined the issues detailed in the Clerks Report, and that after being advised that claims would not be paid in full, a formal appeal was narrowly avoided after the shortfall was met by the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC). Following this the Clerk has written ‘The Highland Water Conundrum’ document which has been submitted to the Minister, Defra, the EA and our local authorities, and also circulated to all Board members.

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

RESOLVED

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

Fens Reservoir

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

RESOLVED

> That the Board act as one with the Middle Level Commissioners and other impacted IDBs. Therefore, the Middle Level Commissioners staff, consultants and legal service provider are authorised to act on behalf of and represent the Board.
>
> Acknowledge that the Fens Reservoir DCO may need to overwrite/disallow existing statutory powers held by the Board and delegate the decision making on this to the Clerk, engaging with the Chairman/Vice Chairman as he sees fit.

C.1253 Environment Officers' Report

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

Mr Lakey advised that the Biodiversity Action Plan is currently under review and that the report will be presented to the Board once complete.

Mr Lakey drew the Boards attention to the changes in the Hedgerow Regulations, and advised the Board that the Ecology Team can now check if any works affecting trees may impact on bats. He reminded the Board that any non-routine maintenance works will require a survey before works commence, and the Ecology Team have an environmental screening form that needs to be completed, although this is usually dealt with by Mr Lakey on behalf of the Board when appropriate.

He asked the Board to report any bank slips as soon as possible, as the slip will most likely displace any water voles that may have been present and so will not prevent any repair works being carried out. Alternatively leaving the slip and dealing with it later may give water voles chance to re-establish themselves and therefore prevent works being carried out. Mr Lakey referred the Board to the 'Water Voles – Myth Busting' part of the report.

Mr Lakey reminded the Board of the special licensing that has been developed for IDBs working in the vicinity of badger setts, advising that he and the MLC Ecology team hold the necessary licences and can oversee any works. He also reminded the Board of their culverting policy and that installing culverts should be a last option due to the additional rules and regulations that must be complied with.

The Board are invited to attend a biodiversity training day, although all of this work is undertaken by Mr Lakey on behalf of the Board and so attendance is not essential.

The Board discussed the Biodiversity Nett Gain in relation to all housing developments. Mr Lakey reminded the Board of the importance that their own paperwork trail is in place for environmental mitigation. It is easy to fall foul of the law. Referring back to water voles, he advised the generally speaking the Board should assume that every drain has water voles present.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Report be approved.

C.1254 Chairmans Items

The Chair did not have any additional items to raise.

Mr Taylor asked if attenuation ponds would be likely to attract Great Crested Newts. Mr Lakey thought that one of the largest colonies in the area is at the housing development at Serpentine Green in Peterborough. A discussion regarding the future impact of attenuation ponds and SuDS in new housing developments followed. The Chair asked if Mr Lakey if he know if new ponds were being built to enable access for maintenance, and in particular for slubbing. Mr Lakey reminded the Board that in the previous year they had supported a letter to Local Authorities raising their concerns on the same issue. Board members observed that many ponds they had seen had not been designed in consideration of access for maintenance and could not be accessed in the future for machine cleansing.

C.1255 Consulting Engineers' Reports

The Board considered the report of the Consulting Engineer, and this was taken as read.

Compliance and Enforcement Officer

The Board were pleased to see the creation of this role and supported this proposal, noting that there are many sites within the Boards district that will generate significant discharge fees that will require careful management.

Standing Advice Note

Mrs Martin advised that MLC have published a 'standing advice note' effectively declaring the Middle Level flood and drainage infrastructure 'at capacity', and the Board were asked if they wished to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district. Mrs French thought that such a note would prove useful for the Council Planning Committee when considering future planning applications, and Mr Miscandlon agreed with this. The Chair advised that the Board can only move forward a certain amount of water which means that were they to accept more water they would require more storage. Mr Lakey advised that the Planning Engineer is trying to encourage a single large attenuation facility on large sites rather than lots of smaller ones on smaller development sites managed by a number of different management companies. Referring to the development at Barkers Lane (which is outside of the catchment area of this Board) Mrs French advised that she would be asking Mark Greenwood to contact the Planning Engineer to discuss a country park approach to the issue at that particular development site.

However, after some further discussion it was decided that the Board is at capacity and a suitable advice note should be drafted.

Mr Taylor asked that he be sent a copy of the completed note.
RESOLVED

> That the Board confirms it wishes to create, adopt and issue a standing advice note for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.
>
> That the completed note be sent to Mr Taylor

Operational Services Report

Mr Lakey reported that works were been undertaken as previously approved and talked the Board through his report.

Mr Lakey drew the Board to the condition of the Cannon Kirk attenuation lagoon and associated ditches as pictured in his report. He asked the Board how they would like to proceed with this issue, given that the condition of the lagoon impacts flows from the Boards drains. The Board thought that as discussions are now being undertaken with the developer and as they now have access to the land to carry out maintenance, no further action would be necessary at this time.

Mr Lakey continued with his report and reported on the current issue the Board has with the construction of the new Pump Track in West End Park, March, that has been constructed within the Boards byelaw strip and is preventing machine access to the Boards drain at reach 31-32. This is further compounded by the lack of access to the reach from the opposite side. Mrs French declared an interest in this issue as the Fenland District Council Portfolio Holder for Parks. She outlined the history of the Pump Track development going back to 2018 and advised that Fenland District Council are not currently responsible for the track, and this responsibility lies with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). She advised the Board to contact CCC and will provide the Board with a contact name. Mr Lakey outlined for Board members what has happened to date, and that the track has been constructed within the Boards (and Middle Level Commissioners') easements. CCC have said that they are responsible for the first year, and Mr Lakey will provide further details for Mrs French to take action. The Board cannot carry out any works on the drain due to the close proximity of the track. The Board agreed that they were happy for a resolution to be sought, and that if enforcement action were necessary the Chair make the decision on the Boards behalf.

Mr Lakey concluded his report, adding that maintenance works are carried out as approved, and that flail mowing services are available from MTC as previously. The drains are at a good standard, although there is some cott developing which may require the application of Roundup. This is included in the estimated costs for the year, along with machine cleansing and the details of the costs and plan of works are shown in his report.

RESOLVED

> That the report be approved.
>
> That action be taken in relation to the non-compliance of the Pump Track but that any final enforcement decision be made by the Chair

Mechanical and Electrical Report

The report was reviewed, and Mr Lakey reminded the Board that GiA funding is not expected to be available before 2026/27. The uncertainty around funding is matched with an uncertainty as to what work would qualify for any funding. Being an urban Board may be of benefit in this regard.

The weed screen controller has now been replaced following failure, and this was funded through the Storm Recovery Grant T2A funding allocation.

In his report the M&E Engineer Mr Bantoft has advised the Board that the main pump control panel is a cause for concern, and a new controller has been ordered. These works were agreed at the meeting of the Board on 9th May 2024, but it is hoped that this work can now be funded through the Storm Recovery Grant T2B scheme.

RESOLVED

That the report be approved.

C.1256 Health & Safety

Mr Lakey advised that an inspection was carried out in January, but the associated report had not been received. Cope have therefore agreed to carry out a new visit and will provide a new report at no additional cost to the Board.

Mr Lakey advised that the Cope contract is now due for renewal. Cope have indicated that there will be a slight increase in fee, and in order to show due diligence other quotes are being sought before committing to any deal. The Chair asked if MLC would consider having their own Health and Safety Officer who could then provide services to Boards. Mr Lakey advised that MLC now have an operations Manager responsible for Health and Safety, and he is liaising with Cope, but at present there is no intention for MLC to offer this kind of service.

C.1257 District Officers Report

The District Officer gave a verbal report. He advised that there had been a problem with the pump, but this has now been resolved, and everything is working well. However, he advised that there could be a future problem with the trailer that collects the weed from the weed screen, in that these needs emptying all the time. Access is becoming increasingly difficult as the roadway and trailer area were built at a time that tractors were much smaller than they are now.

Mr Lakey advised that at present Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) cannot provide a removal service to the Board, but he would like to see the trailer taken away and the weed to be deposited directly onto the ground. MLC would then look at providing the service of removal of the weed heap. The Chair advised that there is a piece of ground at present with a compost heat. Mr Lakey advised that ecologically, he would be more concerned about the frequency of moving the weed, and heap management as regards to wildlife. The heap could be beneficial for reptiles. The pumping station was built on a small footprint, so access is tight.

C.1258 Governance

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

RESOLVED

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

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

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

The Board noted the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor

b) Review of Internal Controls

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

RESOLVED

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

c) Approval of authorised officers for operational/regulatory roles

RESOLVED

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

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

d) Responsible Finance Officer

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

RESOLVED

The Board considered and approved the recommendations that:

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

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

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

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

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

e) Insured Values

The Insurance Valuation was reviewed, and the Board agreed that the valuation should be index liked for insurance purposes.

RESOLVED

That the insurance valuation for the pumping station be index linked.

f) Policy Reviews

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

RESOLVED

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

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

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

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

g) Risk Management Strategy and Internal Controls

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within the Board's Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website), noted the system of financial Internal Controls (as published on website) and no additional controls were highlighted as required.

h) Exercise of Public Rights

The Clerk 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.

i) Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

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

RESOLVED

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

j) DEFRA IDB1 Return

RESOLVED

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

k) Annual Governance Statement

RESOLVED

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

C.1259 Finance Report – Looking Back

a) Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Finance Officer, and the payments detailed for 2024. The Board noted the Storm Recovery Grant Fund bids and that the Board received £8,232.94 for excess winter pumping costs, and £23,354 was received to fund the Control Panel Replacement at Burrowmoor PS.

b) Payments for 2024

The Payments were reviewed and accepted.

c) Highland Water Contributions

The Board noted the Highland Water contributions.

d) 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.

C.1260 Finance Report – Looking Forward

a) Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions:

b) ADA subscription

The Clerk reported that ADA have increased subscriptions by 6.5% for 2025, from £636 to £ 678 (plus VAT).

RESOLVED

That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2025 be paid.

c) District Officers Fee

The Board gave consideration to the District Officers Fee for 2025-2026.

RESOLVED

That the Board agree that the District Officers Fee increase to £1965 for 2025/2026.

d) Rental of Land at Pillards Corner

Mrs Martin advised the Board that one of the Boards tenants at Pillards Corner has given notice, and that the tenancy will end in October 2026. The Board accepted the notice. Mr Lakey asked the Board if they had considered using the land for Biodiversity Nett Gain rather than renting for agricultural use. The Board discussed and considered this but decided that they would prefer to rent the land to a new tenant. They asked the Lead Clark to contact Maxey Grounds to make the necessary arrangements.

The Board discussed the current rental values of the remaining parcels of land and decided that they would consider rent reviews once the vacant land had been valued. The decision regarding the rent review for the remaining land was deferred to the Chair once the values were established.

The Chair asked if the Board's land had been registered with Land Registry. Mrs Martin advised that she thought it had not but would check. The Board agreed that if it is found the land has not been registered, the registration process should be undertaken.

RESOLVED

The Lead Clerk to contact Maxey Grounds to make arrangements to advertise the vacant plot.

Once a valuation is received for the rental on the vacant lot, the Chair to decide if rent reviews on the remaining plots are required.

That the Board's land be registered with Land Registry if it has not previously been registered.

e) Contributions from Developers

The Commissioners noted the Contributions from Developers.

f) Precept

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

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

The precept for 2024 was £2,052.25.

RESOLVED

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

g) Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2025/26.

The Board reviewed the proposed budget for 2025/2026. The budget includes the works identified by the Operations Engineer.

RESOLVED

That the budget is agreed.

h) Rate Requirement for 2025/26

The Chair advised that the rate required to cover the budget estimate is 2.0p in the £. It has been possible to keep the rate at this level due to the development in the area generating fees, but if there is no grant funding available, this rate would only generate half of the pump refurbishment costs.

No further discussion followed, and Mr Miscandlon proposed the rate of 2.0p in the £. This was seconded by Mrs French and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £10,738 be raised by drainage rates and special levy and by way of a contribution from Middle Level Commissioners.

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 £1,036 and £9,702.

iv) That a rate of 2.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That a Special Levy of £9,702 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 referred to in resolution v).

vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

<u>C.1261 Middle Level IDB Change</u>

Mrs Martin referred to the Clerks Report relating to the Middle Level IDB Change and provided a precis of the report. The Chair added that this Board will eventually have to merge, but he was not sure how this would be best approached. Mr Dunham said he was concerned about the loss of local knowledge, and Mr Miscandlon added that all of the Boards he sits on have said the same thing.

Mr Lakey reminded the Board how many local landowners sit on numerous Boards, and Mrs Martin explained that in other locations where Boards have amalgamated into larger Boards, the local knowledge is still retained by having a sub-committee type arrangement to focus on specific Board areas, which could largely align with the previous Board areas. The Chair was concerned that as with existing Boards, there could be a situation where some sub-committees use funds well, but others do not.

The Board agreed to support the development of the detailed design and agreed to feedback via the Chair as requested. The Board also agreed to contribute financially.

<u>RESOLVED</u>

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

<u>C.1262 Date of next Meeting</u>

<u>RESOLVED</u>

That the next Meeting of the Board be held on 7th May 2026 at 6pm at The Middle Level Offices, March.

<u>C.1263 Any Other Business</u>

With no other items being raised by the Board, the meeting was closed at 7.45pm.

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	4
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Gemma Ashby**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the position regarding elections and consider the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments within its appointment of officials.
B. Note the current status of its membership and the role they each play as members serving the interests of the Board.
C. Review attendance records and identify any resolutions as necessary.
D. Outline the training undertaken in the last year as well as future needs or plan for training.
E. Confirm if an individual is to be nominated to represent the Commissioners as a Middle Level Commissioner.

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	5	N/A		5
Actual	4	4 FDC	8	
Vacancies	1		1	

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

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary
1	Michael Deptford	Ratepayer	Vice - Chair
2	Andrew Dunham	Ratepayer	
3	Martyn Wilkinson	Ratepayer	Chair
4	James Pollington	Nominee of rate payer	
5			

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, e.g. major infrastructure, commerce, community groups, environmental interests.

No	Name	Appointing Council	Commentary (one of three categories)
1	Jan French	FDC	Councillor
2	Charlie Marks	FDC	Councillor
3	Alex Miscandlon	FDC	Councillor
4	Tim Taylor	FDC	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	8/5/2025	9/5/2024	11/5/2023	5/5/2022
1	Michael Deptford	Apologies	Present	Present	Present
2	Andrew Dunham	Present	Present	Present	N/A
3	Martyn Wilkinson	Present	Present	Present	Present
4	James Pollington	Present	N/A	N/A	N/A
5					

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	5/12/2025	6/12/2024	6/10/2023	13/12/2022
1	Martyn Wilkinson	Apologies	Present	Present	Apologies

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	8/5/2025	9/5/2024	11/5/2023	5/5/2022
1	Jan French (FDC)	Present	Present		Present
2	Charlie Marks (FDC)		Present	Apologies	Present
3	Alex Miscandlon (FDC)	Present	Present		
4	Tim Taylor (FDC)	Present	Present		
5					

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 In appointing the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Board is expected to follow the principles within the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, there is a strong presumption that no individual should serve in any one post for more than ten years. The tenure of the current Chairman is 4.9 years, and the tenure of the current Vice Chairman is 1.9 years.

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). See 'The IDB governance future within the Middle Level of the Fen' within the Clerk's Report.

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 IDBs are expected by Defra to support relevant externally accredited training and/or professional development of its Board Members, officers and employees (if appropriate). It is therefore recommended that the Board identifies and budgets for any such requirements.

5.2 In addition, IDBs are expected by Defra to provide in-house training and/or professional development opportunities for its Board Members, officers and employees (if appropriate).

5.3 Topics that Defra suggest are i) Governance ii) Ethics iii) Finance iv) Environment v) Health, safety & welfare and vi) Communications & engagement.

5.4 The Board are asked to outline the training undertaken in the last year as well as future needs or plan for training. 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.

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

6. Governance

6.1 Given their land holdings, the March 3rd District Drainage Commissioners are eligible to be a Middle Level Commissioner. The Board are asked whether they wish to nominate an individual to represent the Commissioners as a Middle Level Commissioner.

Author Name: Gemma Ashby
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	5
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC**	**Subject:**	**CLERK'S REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the content of the report and feedback on items as appropriate.
B. The Board is asked to delegate the approval and publication of new and/or updated policies to the Clerk.
C. Ensure their District Officers keep records to enable completion of Questions 26 & 27 within the IDB1 Annual Report to Defra.

1. MLC Overview

Delivery has been the primary focus within 2025/26. We were successful in securing approximately £4.5m of grant for several IDB Fund (Tranche 2b) submissions and the administration and delivery of these commitments has been a primary focus, particularly for staff in M&E, Operations, Environment & Ecology and Finance, meaning some 'business as usual' activity has been impacted.

This fund, coming with fewer constraints than FCRM grant-in-aid, has enabled us to think and invest differently. We are starting 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. At St Germans Pumping Station for example, we now are starting to gear our infrastructure, turning our assets from feeling like a financial burden into engines that drive our business more efficiently. 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 staff 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.

It is also clear that MLC and the IDBs need to reduce our collective reliance on government grant in aid funding and highland water payments. Whilst we remain focussed on influencing and informing policy shifts, MLC and IDB assets are of the age that we cannot avoid the scale of capital works ahead of us that will cost hundreds of millions of pounds to develop and deliver. Collectively we have a significant gap in both capacity and capability, alongside a dependence on Fens 2100+ driving a case for change in how our assets are invested in.

Thanks to the support of the Middle Level Board, we now have greater capability to press our regulatory teeth and turn the significant development pressures we face within our catchment into a risk management and financial opportunity rather than seeing it negatively. A further increase in staff capacity has been approved to better cater for the workload, increase cost recovery to further reduce costs to ratepayers. Fees from developers are also a critical source of funding to develop and deliver the capital works on the MLC and/or IDB infrastructure that serves and benefits developments.

2. MLC Services to IDBs

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

Given that our focus in 2025/26 has been on establishing and strengthening our Planning, Compliance & Enforcement Service for MLC/IDBs, IDB Fund Delivery for MLC/IDBs and enabling the transfer of seven IDBs outside of the Middle Level to new service providers, the Service Guide and associated fee structure will continue to be developed during 2026 with a view to being ready to implement for 2027/28.

3. Policy Reviews

There are several new policies that need to be developed and published over the course of the next year, along with updates to existing policies. Given the nature of our catchment and our services to administered IDBs, most policies need to be consistent rather than bespoke for each IDB. Any policy also needs to come into effect at the same time across MLC and/or all relevant IDBs.

Planned new policies include:

- IT Policy
- Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Approach to CDM Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Act 2023
- Compliance & Enforcement Policy (primarily to support our regulation of consent compliance, unconsented works and associated enforcement)

The Board is asked to delegate the approval and publication of new and/or updated policies to the Clerk.

4. Waste Exemptions

Defra and the Environment Agency introduced waste exemptions in circa 2008/09 and there is a suite of exemptions available to IDBs (including D1 exemption which allows for depositing waste from dredging inland waters). We followed Environment Agency advice at the time and have one suite of exemptions that covers the MLC and all our administered IDB operations.

This approach now requires improvement and mitigation to de-risk operations for IDBs and MLC individually and collectively. Following discussion with MLC and IDB Chairs, over the next 12-months we aim to move to MLC and each administered IDB having their own suite of waste exemptions and associated implementation controls. There will also likely be a need for associated training materials for IDBs and their District Officers.

We will likely require external resources/services to deliver this improvement and the cost associated with the work will be divided equally.

5. The IDB governance future within the Middle Level of the Fens

IDBs and Board members had the opportunity to discuss and provide feedback on the outline design in Q1 of 2025/26. Members of the 'Case for Change' working group met in September 2025 to review the feedback on the Outline Design and agree next steps. The consensus is that people need something more specific to debate. We also, unsurprisingly, have people on either extreme of the spectrum between staying as we are and not seeing any need for change, and those that feel radical change is long overdue. Most are somewhere in-between.

A proposal has been conceived that the working group supports moving to 'Detailed Design'. This proposal is to move from the current 25 IDBs to 7 IDBs, in phases, over the next 15 years. The proposal aims to balance:

1 Hydrological common sense and logical alignment.
2 The Outline Design feedback.
3 Respective readiness for and need for change.
4 Likely trigger points for change.

This proposal aims to provide:

1 An option for detailed design and subsequent debate.
2 The ability to phase change and make it more bite-sized.
3 Time for IDBs to make steps to align 'standards' ahead of amalgamation.
4 A meaningful change that will enable improvements and efficiency within MLC & IDB working.
5 A middle ground between the 'go big' and 'stay small' views.
6 A platform for further and quicker change should it be needed or if the Fens Reservoir enables.

We aim to have the Detailed Design undertaken by April 2026 so we can have an IDB Chairs session on it ahead of consultation through Autumn 2026. Depending upon response and agreement, Boards would be asked to approve any final proposal (particularly any Boards amalgamating in any Phase 1) at their 2027 AGMs.

6. 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.

7. Electricity

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 Chairmen 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.

8. 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 and provided them with the information we have to hand for their data requests. W also hosted a case study visit in January 2026. 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 2025 we also 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.

9. IDB 1 (Annual Reporting to Defra)

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 has on the sector in terms of governance and responsibilities.

Whilst MLC can derive most of the financial and non-financial information on behalf of our administered IDBs, there are an increasing number of questions where we require information from the Boards directly. Including, for IDBs that do not use the MLC for their operational services their District Officer will need to keep records of the length (in kilometres) of i) the length of watercourse maintained by the Board in the financial year and ii) the cumulative length of works on maintained watercourses (Questions 26 & 27 in the form).

If no answers are received from Boards, then questions will be left blank within returned forms.

10. IDB Precept

Section 139(1) of the Water Resources Act 1991 (WRA 1991) empowers the Environment Agency to require a contribution from Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) each year towards its operational costs. The mechanism for collecting the contribution is for the Environment Agency to issue a precept to the relevant IDBs requiring payment of the amount due.

There is a statutory duty to spend IDB precept revenue "only in the carrying out of the Environment Agency's flood and coastal erosion risk management functions… in or for the benefit of the flood risk management region in which [the precept] is raised".

The amount of the contribution should be what the Environment Agency considers to be ‘fair’ and the legislation places a duty upon the Environment Agency to provide to the IDB a statement which provides detail of the purposes of which the contribution demanded by precept will be applied and the basis of the calculation of the contribution.

The Environment Agency, via the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) has committed to improve the clarity and transparency of how and where IDB Precept is spent along with the associated calculation. The existing approach is rooted in discussions and agreements that have been lost in time with changing corporate knowledge; therefore, it is likely to take a few years of incremental improvement to get to a clearer position.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC**	**Subject:**	**ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Sofi Lloyd**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. **Review and approve the new Biodiversity Action Plan** (please see draft on the IDB webpage on the Middle Level Website - Middle Level Commissioners - March 3rd DDC
B. Propose to set the biodiversity budget at £500 to contribute towards an ecological survey of the land owned by the Board with a view to exploring BNG options.
C. Consider making a requirement for all land rental renewals to include the condition to establish an uncultivated grass margin of a minimum width of 4m from the top of the bank along all IDB drains.
D. Note that Key Environmental Compliance Indicators (KCIs), as below, have been launched this year to assess and report the environmental compliance of the IDB in a consistent way. This will help to ensure that any areas of environmental risk are flagged promptly, and the environmental achievements of the Board are recognised and published.
E. Note that a review of the IDBs Environmental and waste permits is required and will be planned with the Chair and VC in the coming months.

Review of Key Environmental Compliance Indicators (KCIs)

Key:	Not Achieved / Information Not Available	Partly complete / A date has been set for completion. (provide date and resource)	Complete
Name of Board Environmental Representative:		**M Wilkinson/M Lakey**	
KCI:	**Description of KCI:**	**Status:**	**Comments:**
1.	A current channel categorisation map & reasoning is available	Complete	Completed 2025
2.	Standard Operating Procedures audit has been undertaken and works considered compliant	Complete	Completed by M Lakey
3.	The previous year's maintenance record is available for review and to inform the following year's works planning.	Complete	Yes
4.	A channel maintenance plan (flail mowing and desilting) has been prepared for Board review and approval.	Complete	3–4-year desilting rotation for most drains, some pinch points more regularly. Flailed to waters edge where desilting is progressing. Flail mowing as per plan. At least 1m margin left on at least 1 bank everywhere.
5.	All non-routine works undertaken in the previous year were screened for environmental impacts and opportunities using the ESR process	Complete	n/a
6.	The Biodiversity Action Plan has been reviewed and objectives for the previous year have been met and following objectives set	Complete	Completed Apr 2026
7.	Biodiversity budget is proposed and defined	Complete	As above
8.	At least one Board Representative has attended at least one biodiversity training / information event in the year and reported relevant details to the board	Complete	ML
9.	There has been no net loss of open watercourse (via culverting or other) in the district in the previous year	Complete	Checked
10.	A current map of badger setts in the district is available and licensable works around them was undertaken compliantly and in line with licence conditions	Partly complete	ML in progress

middle level commissioners

March Third IDB

Annual Environmental Review - Notes from Meeting

Attended by: Sofi Lloyd, Martin Wilkinson, Morgan Lakey

Date: 21/04/2025

Point No.	Notes	Action by and due date
1	The KCI's for the Board report was completed	
2	The structure at point 33 should be checked and ownership defined. Belief is that it is an inspection chamber.	ML 2026
3	Land owned by the Board identified. Totals approx. 14.5ha straddling Burrowmoor Drain. All land within a square drawn from points 8-11-13-14 and another square drawn between points 14-39-40-17. SL will map on GIS	SL 2026
4	ML & SL confirmed that enforcement team are progressing a resolution to the unfinished mitigation lagoons west of the A141.	
5	Discussion around the progress of the Solar farm proposal. SL recommends that the Board organises an ecological survey on the IDB owned land to benchmark habitat condition and potentially calculate what the value of the land could be for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). SL explained that the creation or enhancement of ditches are a particularly valuable offering on the BNG market and would prove very useful to local developers who are looking to offset their development impacts on ditches in the area. But also, valuable nationally due to a shortage. SL will provide a quote for MLC ecologists to undertake the survey.	SL 2026
6	Noted that the land owned by the board is unlikely to be grade A agricultural land as the soil is relatively poor so would be ideal to put it to non-agricultural use with a commercial benefit for the Board.	
7	Noted that peat was often found in small pockets about 2-3 feet deep when reprofiling drains previously.	
8	Noted that the channel from point 32 east and between points 24-25 is culverted so will not impact on the identified sensitive conservation area features there.	
9	ML will check if the channel blockage between point 22-23 is consented. There are concerns that the water within it is stagnating	ML 2026
10	Noted that the "sale field" south of point 17 & 19 is fully hedged and is a nice refuge for wildlife. It is rarely used. SL will identify owners and ask if there is anything the IDB would be able to do enhance the habitat for example putting up barn owl boxes / bat boxes etc. This would nicely extend and enhanced the habitat, which is also joined to the Gault Willows CWS, crematorium and gold course.	SL 2026
11	Belief is that the traditional orchard shown on mapping at point 21-22 is no longer there. SL will check.	SL 2026
12	Noted that point 29-30 is culverted and the traditional orchard shown on mapping at point 29 may not be there – SL to check	SL 2026
13	SL emphasised that because there are very few designated nature sites, either formally or identified priority habitats, within the catchment, that the ditches and drains are even more vital for wildlife as there is no-where else for them to go	
14	There is possibly an Elm at the crossroads at point 21. SL to check	SL 2026
15	There is possibly a Black Poplar in the park near to point 23. SL to check	SL 2026
16	There are wildflowers along the ditch between point 31-23	
17	There are no known fen droves in the district	
18	Discussed that the Board could consider whether they could make it a condition of renewal / rental that tenants of land owned by the board should establish uncultivated / grass margins along all IDB ditches of a specified width to better buffer and expand the riparian habitat.	MW/ML 2026
19	Noted that rental contracts of IDB - owned land differed in length and type.	
20	Noted that the pump drain is sedgy and reedy and water vole and kingfishers are known to exist there.	
21	SL stressed that it was really important for all sightings of wildlife to be reported to MLC.	
22	SL will update the BAP on todays' discussions and send to MW to review with the aim of having a final draft available ahead of the Board meeting for Board members to review and accept at the Board meeting.	SL & MW Apr 26
23	Remaining meeting points are captured in the BAP draft and Board Report KCIs.	-

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners</td><td>Item No:</td><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Meeting:</td><td>MARCH THIRD DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)</td><td>Subject:</td><td>CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date:</td><td>Thursday 7th May 2026</td><td>Officer Responsible:</td><td>Nicola Oldfield</td></tr>
</table>

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. **Consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.**
C. **Confirm if it wishes to progress pump overhaul works.**
D. **Confirm if it wishes to consider submitting projects for inclusion in the FCERM Investment Programme (from July 2026) and agree the recommendations for prioritisation.**

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, unlicenced 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

Works delivered for this district include the following:

- Improvement works for mobile pump deployment

5. 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)

<u>Asset Refurbishment Projects</u>

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 new 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 consider part-funding projects. 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 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 onwards
- delivery 2027/28 onwards

The Consulting Engineer will prioritise workload based primarily on Key Health Indicators. Refer to the Mechanical & Electrical report for specific recommendations.

The Board is asked to:

- **Consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly**

- **Confirm if it wishes to consider submitting projects for inclusion in the FCERM Investment Programme (from July 2026)**

- **Liaise with the Consulting Engineer to determine project suitability and timescales**

- **Agree making a contribution towards the project costs to aid funding prioritisation**

- **Confirm acceptance of recommendations so we can prioritise developing funding bids ASAP.**

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1:	**Capital Programme**
Appendix 2:	**List of applications since last meeting**
Appendix 3:	**Operational Services Report**
Appendix 4:	**M&E Report**

Appendix 1

March Third District Drainage Commissioners														
Capital Improvement Programme (2026/2027)		**PREVIOUS YEARS**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**	**FUTURE YEARS**	**ALL YEARS**
		Pre Yr 0	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**	**Year 7**	**Year 8**	**Year 9**	**Year 10**	**Post Year 10**	**Total Expenditure**
Burrowmoor p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	500.0	2,500.0	2,500.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5500.0
	Pump overhaul	3.6	0	10.0	0.0	80.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	93.6
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipmet	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Pumping station Control building refurbishment/replacement	0	0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	Pumping station compound/surrounds improvements	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drainage Channels	Refurbishment of inlets/outfalls	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		3.6	**0**	**15**	**0**	**80**	**0**	**500**	**2,500**	**2,500**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**5,599**

Appendix 2

There have been 18 planning applications responded to since the last meeting.

There have been 2 Byelaw Consent applications (to undertake works in and around watercourses) have been granted since the last meeting.

There have been 2 Byelaw Consent applications (to discharge to a watercourse) application processed since the last meeting.

There have been 1 infiltration device applications acknowledged since the last meeting.

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**		**8**
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES**	
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Morgan Lakey**

1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance

The maintenance works carried out last year generally accorded with the recommendations approved by the Board at its last annual meeting.

A Roundup herbicide application was made to reaches in advance of the programmed machine cleansing works and to other district drains where it was required to control dense reed stands and emergent aquatic vegetation.

Grant funded improvements at Pumping Station to aid mobile pump deployment in the event of a breakdown

The Commissioners were successfully awarded part of the DEFRA IDB funding package to improve access for the deployment of mobile pumps in the event of a breakdown. This allowed for fully funded access improvements at the pumping station and the track from Borrowmoor Road.

The Board's flail mowing contractors, M & C Agri Services, have indicated that they are available to undertake the flail mowing requirements for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing the Board's drains has been included in the estimated costs.

A recent inspection of the district drains has been undertaken with the Chairman, indicating that the majority of the Board's drains are being maintained to a good standard and are in a generally satisfactory condition.

<u>Drains to the West of the Bypass</u>

The inspection highlighted the drains to the west of the bypass are in a satisfactory condition following last year's machine cleansing works. At this early time in the growing season there are some sporadic stands of emergent aquatic vegetation and filamentous algae (cott) evident in the drains that were not included in last year's programme. It is recommended the affected reaches are treated with an application of Roundup herbicide followed by light machine cleansing as soon as the harvest of the adjacent crop allows access for the works to be completed.


Early Season Cott in Reach 18-19


Emergent Aquatic Vegetation, Point 15

The Cannon & Kirk attenuation lagoon and associated ditches remain inundated with reeds and bullrush, severely reducing the water conveyance of the Commissioner's system. Drains to the East of the bypass now run through the lagoon as the connection at Point 23 has been blocked, sending all flows through the un-adopted drains and lagoon. At the time of writing the report the Middle Level compliance and enforcement team are looking to assist with resolving the historic matters and hopefully a positive progression can be reported at the Commissioner's annual meeting this year.

Historically, late occurring algal blooms have been problematic and required clearing from the Board's drains to the west of the bypass later in the season. A provisional sum has been included within the estimated costs to allow for any additional Cott cleansing work that may be required.

Drains to the East of the Bypass

The district drains to the east of the bypass remain in a satisfactory condition and are being maintained to a good standard. The BMX track adjacent to the Board's drain at Point 31 remains unconsented, however mitigation measures have been agreed with FDC and an update will be provided at the Commissioner's annual meeting.

A provisional sum has also been included within this year's estimated costs to allow for any emergency bank repair, culvert clearance or debris removal and disposal works that may be necessary later in the year.

An allowance has been included within this year's estimated costs to allow for a Roundup aquatic herbicide application to be made in advance of the proposed machine cleansing work and in any other Board's drains where it is required to control emergent weed and reed growth.

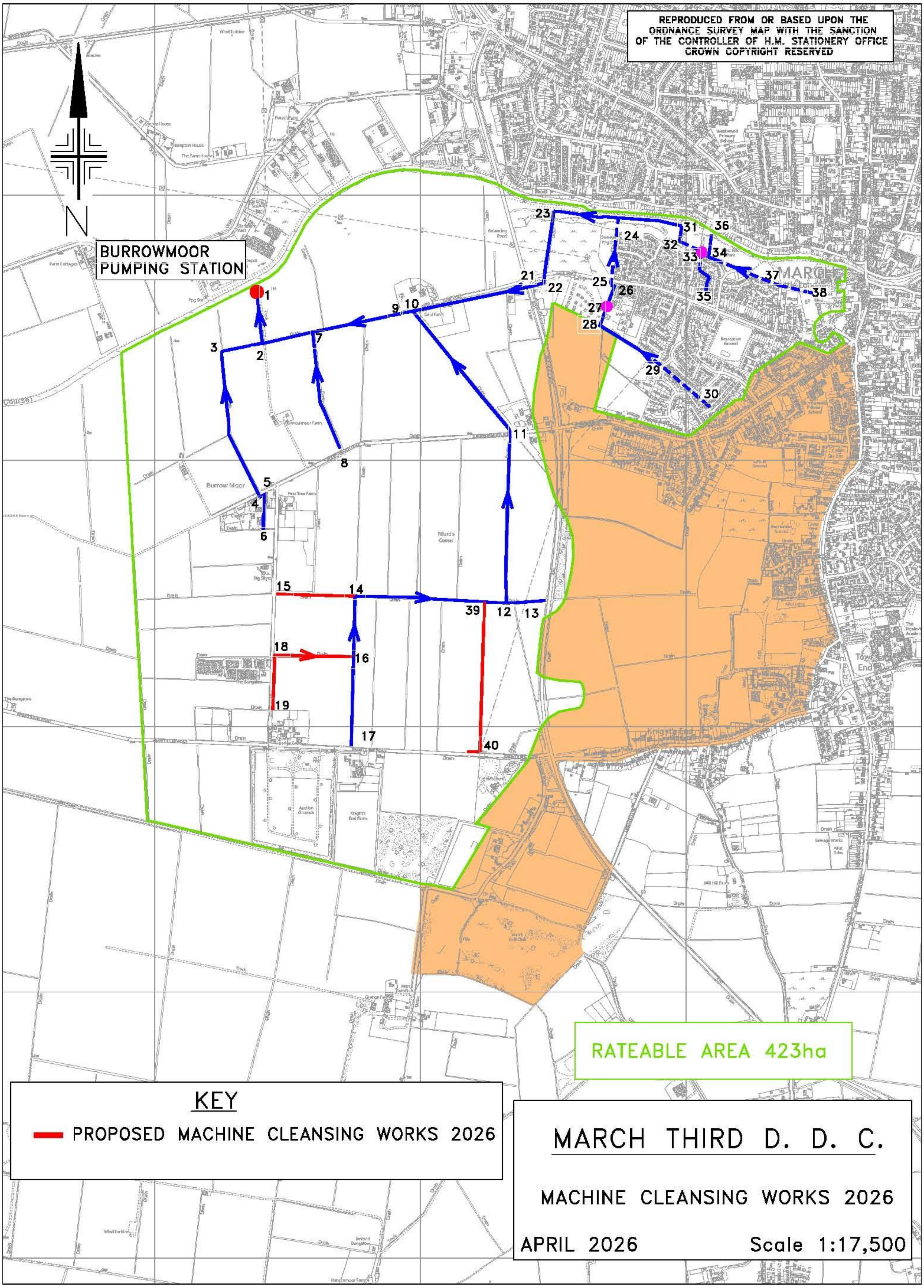
2. Estimated Costs of Anticipated Drain Maintenance and Weed Control Programme

The estimated cost of this year's recommended Weed Control and Drain Maintenance works is as follows. Please refer to the site plan at the end of this report for locations.

					£	£
Machine Cleanse						
1.	Reaches 16-18-19	500	m	@	1.40	700.00
2.	Reaches 14-15	300	m	@	1.40	420.00
3.	Reaches 39-40	600	m	@	1.40	840.00
4.	**Provisional Sum** Allow sum for cott clearance or emergency machine cleansing works		Item	Sum		2000.00
5.	Flail mowing district drains		Item	Sum		2500.00
6.	**Provisional Sum** Allowance for emergency bank repair, culvert cleansing works or debris removal/disposal works		Item	Sum		1000.00
7.	Allow sum for Roundup application to reed and emergent weed		Item	Sum		600.00
8.	Fees for inspection, preparation and submission of report to the Commissioners, arrangement and supervision of chemical applications and maintenance works		Item	Sum		1100.00
TOTAL					**£**	**9160.00**

Orders for the application of herbicides by the Middle Level Commissioners are accepted on condition that they are weather dependent and they will not be held responsible for the efficacy of any treatments

Author Name: Morgan Lakey
Role: Operations Manager


REPRODUCED FROM OR BASED UPON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP WITH THE SANCTION OF THE CONTROLLER OF H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED
N
BURROWMOOR PUMPING STATION
MARCH
RATEABLE AREA 423ha
KEY
PROPOSED MACHINE CLEANSING WORKS 2026
MARCH THIRD D. D. C.
MACHINE CLEANSING WORKS 2026
APRIL 2026
Scale 1:17,500

Appendix 4

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		8
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**	
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Dave Bantoft**

1. M&E key messages and advice

Other than the matters previously reported or described below, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at the stations is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition. The station and pumps are at an age where reliability is a concern, and a plan should be put in place to overhaul or replace items as necessary to ensure ongoing reliability.

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 **M&E Equipment Key Health Indicators**

Over the past 2 years we have been compiling and verifying Pumping Station Key Date to allow easier identification of equipment age and the need for refurbishment to assist in developing an investment plan for asset refurbishment or replacement. To ensure reliability, resilience and longevity of the pumping equipment it needs to be refurbished or replaced at suitable intervals. We have experienced examples lately of pumps being left too long and failing, or when they are removed for overhaul, the condition is very poor and the pump overall lifetime has been reduced significantly, which is not cost-effective use of the asset. The same is true for control panels, component failures often damage other components incurring costly repairs and machine downtime. Overall, it is more cost effective to run well maintained equipment.

The pictures below (not this station) are of pump bolts that have been in situ for 20 years and have corroded to the point of failure as shown by the gap between the flanges. Although now rebuilt with stainless steel bolts they were not in the past. The pump tubes are also heavily corroded which reduces pump life considerably. Ideally pumps should be refurbished every 10 years because by the time they reach 15 to 20 years it is likely the corrosion will heavily impact their overall residual life.

Table 1: Key Health Indicators

	Station				Weedscreen				
Station	Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul		Controls	Bars	WSC	WSC O/H	Controls
Burrowmoor	1964	1964	2005 (1)	2006 (2)	2025	2002	2002	2021	2025

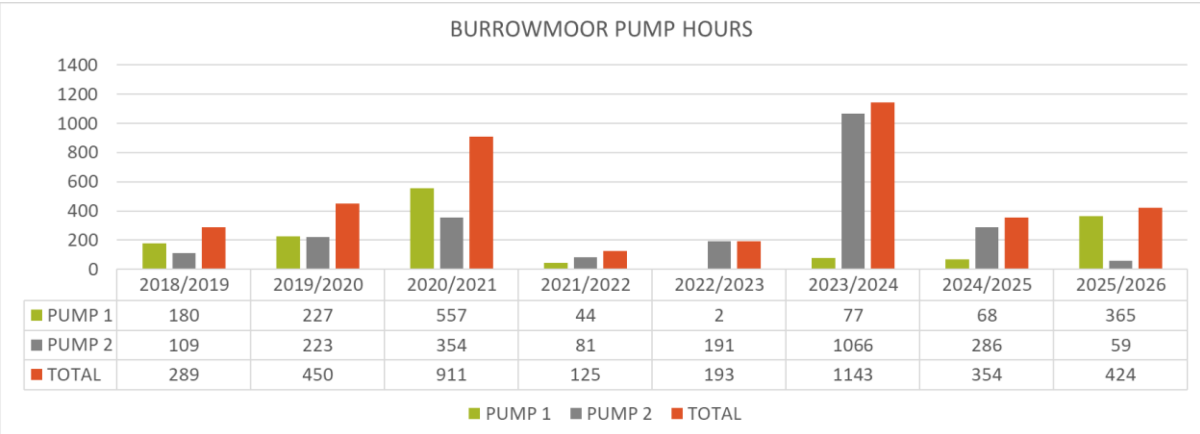
The Key Health Indicators table above shows the critical area for concern and improvement is the pumps. The Storm and Recovery GiA has funded the recent replacement of the Pumps Control Panel and Weedscreen controller replacement.
The pumps are both 62 years old with last refurbishments ranging from 20 to 21 years ago. The Board is advised to develop and start a pump refurbishment/replacement plan for the 2 pumps that are due refurbishment. Having a plan in place and underway helps to secure further grant funding when it comes available, such as the recent IDB Recovery Fund.

Standard pumps of the type at Burrowmoor are normally cost effective to repair and lead times can be as short as 4 weeks or can be over a year depending on contractor availability and pump condition. Costs can be in the range £30k to £100k depending on pump condition.

Please confirm when the board would like to overhaul these pumps. It is likely these pumps will cost circa £40k each to overhaul.

2. Pumping summary

2.1 <u>Pumping Hours</u>



3. Inspections

3.1 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are in date.

Station	EICR Pass Date	EICR Due
Burrowmoor	29-Mar-24	29-Mar-2029

4 Water level Management

The pumping stations have summer and winter pump level references based on historic values which serve as very good reference points. I would actively encourage pump attendants to vary these to suit their current catchment conditions. For example, running pump start and stop levels at intermediate settings above the base winter settings during times of high Soil Moisture Deficit and then reducing towards winter level setpoints as the SMD reduces or if there is heavy rainfall forecast. This needs to be balanced with ensuring the pump has a good operating range so it is never short cycling (hunting). This can also be used to ensure maximum benefit of the lower night electricity rate.

Ultimately this takes more operator time but will produce more efficient running and reduce costs. We can advise on this if needed and show some good and bad examples to help with setting and monitoring your pumps.

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	9
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC**	**Subject:**	**HEALTH & SAFETY**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note its Health & Safety accountabilities.
B. Take initial actions to strengthen its governance of Health & Safety (Section 3).

1. Introduction

The ADA Good Governance Guide covers Health & Safety (P90-91) and there is a new guide in development that will go much deeper into responsibilities and standards. The Annual Report (IDB1) to Defra also asks the following questions:

- Whether the Board has a current Health & Safety Policy
- Whether the Board has a Board Member focussed on ensuring that Health & Safety is considered when Board decisions are made.
- Whether the Board has a responsible officer for Health & Safety.
- The number of 'near miss' incidents in the reporting period.
- Details of any reportable incidents in the reporting period.

2. Clarification of H&S accountabilities

For the avoidance of doubt, an IDB and the MLC are each different public bodies, independent from each other. In the UK, a public body can delegate specific health and safety *tasks* and *functions* to another body, but it cannot transfer its ultimate legal accountability or liability for ensuring that those duties are carried out safely. The original public body retains overall responsibility. Accountabilities and responsibilities cannot be outsourced to H&S service providers either.

Delegation of statutory functions requires explicit laws to enable, and these do not exist within MLC and IDB legislation. Specific day-to-day tasks can be delegated to competent individuals or organisations, provided there are clear arrangements for supervision, monitoring, and reporting. Delegation should be set out in formal, robust contracts or agreements (e.g., a written contract or a scheme of delegation) that clearly define roles, responsibilities, reporting arrangements, and monitoring procedures.

Currently, the only H&S task that MLC provides for administered IDBs is to facilitate specialist H&S advice via a group arrangement currently with AW Safety Management Ltd (previously COPE) as the supplier. As MLC further matures their own Health & Safety capacity, capability and standards, it may be that they can offer a broader service to administered IDBs.

The specific scope of services/advice that each IDB wants or needs from AW Safety Management Ltd is within their gift and responsibility to determine. Each Board essentially pays for an annual day with the H&S advisor as well as their ad hoc advice as required. These days have in recent years been focussed on a site inspection (e.g. pumping stations), however there is a diminishing value in repeat inspections of the same asset. It is also not clear whether Board's are making use of the ad hoc advice arrangements that they are paying for.

Where MLC are delivering specific operational services for an IDB (e.g. overseeing the maintenance programme, M&E works, ecological surveys) then they have responsibility to manage the H&S associated with those activities and any contractors they use. The IDB remains accountable for assuring themselves of MLC's competence in this regard.

3. Strengthening IDB H&S governance

It is recommended that the Board review its governance of its Health & Safety accountabilities. This should include the following initial actions, but not necessarily be limited to these:

a) Reconfirm if they have a lead Board Member and responsible official for H&S, and if so, who they are.
b) Confirming which Board Members and officials (e.g. District Officers, Pump Attendants) have been suitably trained in H&S leadership (e.g. IOSH Managing Safely) via their 'day job' employers, providing certification to MLC so it can be held on the Board's file.
c) Identifying Members and Officials (and employees) who ought to be trained*. This will then need to be budgeted for and arranged.
d) Review the Board's near miss and accident reporting approach and ensure any records are sent to MLC Offices for inclusion on the Board's file. MLC have template forms for their own H&S management that can be provided.
e) Consider its wider H&S risk exposure and target the days with AW Safety Management Ltd accordingly.
f) Provide feedback as to whether a broader H&S service from the MLC would be valued (reducing or replacing the need for a 3rd party service provider) and what range of services would be most valuable.

**The Institution of Occupational Health & Safety (IOSH) Manging Safely Course is a 3-day classroom style course costing circa £600 (exc VAT). There are also online learning options available.*

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Health and Safety Workplace Inspection

March Third DDC

Burrowmoor Pumping Station

carried out on

Thursday, 08 January 2026

by

AW Safety Management Ltd

Key Information	
Client:	March Third DDC
Site:	Burrowmoor Pumping Station
Site Contact:	Middle Level Commissioners / Martyn Wilkinson
Site Contact E-mail:	enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk
Inspection date:	08/01/2026
Inspected by:	Martin Watson
Introduction:	This health and safety Inspection Report is part of the annual support programme from AW Safety Management and is designed to review the practical implementation of health and safety arrangements within the Company. The purpose of the inspection was to assess systems, management controls, working practices and identification of hazards and the controls in place. The aim was to conduct an examination to ensure that best practice is used and there has been compliance within set standards and any relevant legislation. We plan our work to ensure that we have a reasonable expectation of detecting any significant control weaknesses, however, our processes alone are not a guarantee that all operational conditions / activities will be witnessed, this is particularly relevant for any off-site activities. The responsibility for maintaining suitable controls for the safety of employees and anyone else who may be affected and safe operation of the business rests with the management of the Company. Subject areas that require action are detailed in the 'Action Plan' section of the report. Each subject is given a brief outline and the suggested remedial action required, a target completion date (based on the priority rating) and the person responsible for ensuring that the action is addressed. The person responsible listed against the action is based on our visit to site and understanding of the Company structure. Each subject area is given a priority rating, which is based on the auditor/s knowledge, understanding & judgement and is selected to highlight areas of non-compliance and provide general guidance on safe working. Where applicable, a number of key photographs are included in the report, these are referenced to the relevant subject area reference number. These can be used as a reminder of conditions at the time of inspection and provide additional guidance on the action required.

Priority Rating

Priority Rating	Effectiveness of Controls	Target Completion Date
High	Serious 'material breach' of legislation and / or serious and imminent danger to persons	0-3 Months
Medium	Significant control weakness exposing persons to moderate degree of risk	3-6 Months
Low	General guidance or areas where there are opportunities to implement better practice and reduce exposure to risk	6-12 Months

Executive Summary / Additional Comments

Thank you for your time during the visit to the pumping station within the Fens. The inspection was completed to review general health and safety arrangements and site conditions. No major actions were identified at the time of the visit; however, a small number of minor observations have been captured within the action plan below for completeness and continuous improvement. Please review and address these items as appropriate.

Action Plan	
High Priority	0-3 Months
Medium Priority	3-6 Months
Low Priority	6-12 Months

Reference Number	Additional Controls / Actions / Comments	Supporting Photographs / Pictures	Person(s) Responsible	Risk Rating	Action Complete When / Who
1	Barbed wire installed along the top of the external barrier was noted to be degrading and loose. The company should arrange for the barbed wire to be repaired, replaced, or safely removed to ensure it remains secure and effective. This will reduce the risk of unauthorised access while also minimising the potential for injury from loose or falling sections of degraded wire.		Middle Level Commissioners / Martyn Wilkinson	Low	
2	Substantial moss growth was noted on the concrete ramp leading into the enclosure. The company should ensure the ramp is cleaned and treated to remove moss and improve surface grip. This will reduce the risk of slips and falls, particularly during wet or icy conditions, and help maintain safe access and egress for persons required to enter the enclosure.		Middle Level Commissioners / Martyn Wilkinson	Medium	

Action Plan					
High Priority			0-3 Months		
Medium Priority			3-6 Months		
Low Priority			6-12 Months		
Reference Number	**Additional Controls / Actions / Comments**	**Supporting Photographs / Pictures**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Risk Rating**	**Action Complete When / Who**
3	No lighting was provided within the inlet and outlet area from the river. The company should ensure suitable lighting is installed or provided to allow safe access and inspection, particularly during low light conditions. Adequate illumination will reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls and support safe working practices when attending the area outside of daylight hours.		**Middle Level Commissioners / Martyn Wilkinson**	**Medium**	

General Comments	
Audit Carried out on Behalf of:	AW Safety Management Ltd / IRM Safety Ltd
Contact Information (Edwinstowe Office):	Edwinstowe House High Street Edwinstowe Mansfield NG21 9PR 01623 821516
Contact Information (Brampton Office):	Low Cross Buildings 4 Low Cross Street Brampton Cumbria CA8 1NP 01697 270020
Website:	www.awsafety.co.uk / www.integratedrisk.org.uk
Note:	It is important to note that this Audit Report highlights conditions at the time of the visit at the premises detailed on the front cover of the report. It remains the responsibility of the management and staff within the business to make known to the auditor any potentially unsafe conditions or practices which were not apparent during the Audit, or that may take place at any off-site location. It is the ongoing responsibility of management to ensure that the business and its employees operate safely at all times and that any day-to-day health and safety issues are addressed immediately. Any queries or inaccuracies with this report should be raised immediately with the auditor.

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	11
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DDC**	**Subject:**	**GOVERNANCE**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the Annual Return 2024/2025
B. Note the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor and consider the Internal Auditors Report for 2024/2025 (link)
C. Consider any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions occurring during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the Board.
D. Review the effectiveness of existing Internal Controls and identify any new or strengthened Internal Controls that they may require.
E. 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.
F. Review pumping station valuations for insurance purposes.
G. Note the submission of the IDB1 form to Defra. (link)
H. Assure themselves 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.
I. Continue with a limited assurance review approach.

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

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

1.2 As part of their AGAR return, the Board is asked whether it has considered any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions occurring during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the Board.

1.3 The Board/Commissioners to consider the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2025. (Appendix 1)

1.4 The Board are reminded that Whitings LLP were appointed as internal auditor for a five-year period commencing 1st April 2023 (financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28). The Board is asked to act on the advice of the Auditor within its decision making.

1.5 The latest report of the Internal Auditor is available on the MLC website for the consideration. This report covers the MLC and all administered IDBs.

2. Internal Controls

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

2.2 Note the Financial Regulations for the Board is also available on its page via www.middlevel.gov.uk

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

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

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

3. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

3.1 The Board are asked to consider their Risk Management Strategy and review the insured values for their pumping stations as detailed below:

MARCH THIRD DDC
FIXED ASSETS AS AT 31ST MARCH 2026

PUMPING STATION

	As At 31st March 2026
Land at Pillards Corner	500,000.00
Burrowmoor Pumping Station	655,000.00
	1,155,000.00

4. IDB1 (Annual Report to Defra)

4.1 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. The most recent form submitted on behalf of the Board is available on the Board's webpage.

5. Exercise of Public Rights

5.1 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.

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

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

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

5.3 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.

5.4 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.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Appendix 1 Annual Return 2024/2025

March Third District Drainage Commissioners

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025

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

1 The Audit of accounts for the March Third District Drainage Commissioners for the year ended 31st March 2025 has been completed and the accounts have been published.

2 The Annual Governance & Accountability Return including the auditor's certificate and opinion is available for inspection and copying by any local government elector of the area of March Third District Drainage Commissioners

The Clerk
March Third District Drainage Commissioners
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AH

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

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

Announcement made by: P Burrows - Clerk to the Commissioners

Date of Announcement: 10th September 2025

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

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

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

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

09/05/2025 15/05/2025 29/05/2025

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

WHITINGS LLP

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit P. BEECH - WHITINGS LLP

Date 29/05/2025

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

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

	Yes	No	N/A	
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.				*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:

21/05/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

C.1257

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

Chair M.A. W[illegible]

Clerk [illegible]

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	273,337	269,217	*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	1,290	6,983	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	33,344	78,300	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	38,754	54,433	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	269,217	300,067	*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	289,948	312,370	*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	1,159,480	1,159,480	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

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

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

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

Date 28-04-2025

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

21/05/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

C.1258

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

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **March Third District Drainage Commissioners – DB0051**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

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

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

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

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2024/25

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

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

None

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature PKF Littlejohn LLP Date 05/09/2025

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	12
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the Budgeting review
B. Note the Highland Water contributions
C. Consider and approve the payments detailed within Appendix 1.
D. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2025/2026 (Appendix 2).

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

For 2025/2026 the Board set a rate of 2.00p to raise a total of £10,738 in agricultural rates and special levies

Actual expenditure for the year was £4,779. Following a dry summer Fuel was lower than the budget estimate together with Drain works also being lower than budgeted these are the main variances.

Included in the actuals is £1,611 in respect of the control panel work at Burrowmoor pumping station which was the final work under Storm Recovery T1B.

Following the setting of the rates for 2025/2026 additional funding became available in respect of the Storm Recovery Grant, MLC were successful in acquiring additional funding. As part of the Mobile Pump package funding was approved for Access Improvements for the deployment of the Mobile Pumps. £2,990 is Included in Improvement works for the works completed and has been 100% funded.

This will leave the General fund balance as of 31st March 2026 at £227,111. The Development Fund as of 31st March is £89,895. This position is reflected in the Boards financial statements and Annual Return which they are requested to review and approve.

1. **Budgeting**

1.1 The budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2026.

2. Payments for 2025

2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 1.

3. Highland Water Contributions

3.1 Under Section 57 of Land Drainage Act 1991 the Board can make a claim for funding to the Environment Agency for the additional costs of the onward management of water from the district's highland. It is at the Environment Agency's discretion if they pay the contribution and it is accounted for within the local team's annual maintenance budget.

When completing the budget proposal claims were estimated against the likely out-turn for 2024/2025 and the budgeted expenditure for 2025/2026. The highland water claim included within the rating estimates was £1,342.36.

Following the submission of claims for contributions the net sum of £736.74 (£2,782.45 less £3,519.19 paid on account) (inclusive of supervision) had to be refunded back to the Environment Agency for the financial year 2024/2025 based on the Commissioners' actual expenditure on maintenance work for that financial year. £3,459.99 was claimed in respect of 80% of the Commissioners' estimated expenditure for the financial year 2025/2026. This gave rise to the actual claim for 2025/2026 of £2,723.25.

4. Storm Recovery Grant – T2B

4.1 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 2025/2026 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:

Work Done	Value	Penny rate equivalent
Burrowmoor PS – Access Improvements	£2,990	0.55p

5. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2025/2026:

5.1 Annual Return 2025/2026:

To consider the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2026 and the completion of Section 2 of the Annual Return as required in the Audit Regulations. Appendix 2

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

Appendix 1 Payments for 2025/26
Appendix 2 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2025/26

Appendix 1

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

Payments 2025/2026 (1st April 2025 - 31st March 2026)

Middle Level Commissioners - Board ID card	7.37
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery, travelling, health & safety contract and storm recovery - Tranche 1 claim	6,036.82
Middle Level Commisssioners - Fees (Weed control and drain maintenance 2024-2025, planning and development applications)	1,183.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment	1,261.55
Middle Level Commissioners - Link out time clock channels	61.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply remedial health & safety signage	69.60
District Officer's fee (2024-2025)	1,887.00
Environment Agency - Precept	1,046.65
Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscription 2025	813.60
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	281.38
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	301.39
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Discharge consent application - Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd)	72.90
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	294.58
Middle Level Commissioners - Grant in aid storm recovery T2a scheme works	29,656.80
Middle Level Commissioners - Grant in aid received for storm recovery T2a scheme	-24,965.16
PKF Littlejohns LLP - Audit Fee (2024-2025 accounts)	378.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees - (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,141.78
IMServ - Electricity meter operator agreement to 23rd October 2026	44.71
M & C Agri Services Ltd - Flail mowing	2,541.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	103.78
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, storm recovery tranche 2A claim, IDB change contribution and internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners, 2024-2025 accounts)	6,704.66
IMServ - Annual half hourly electricity data collection to 23rd October 2026	138.34
B J Plant Hire Ltd - Drain maintenance	4,668.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	1,637.54
Environment Agency - Precept	1,046.64
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees - (Planning and development applications)	349.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	294.58
Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscription 2026	854.40
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	294.58
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Discharge consent application - Cocksedge Building Contractors Ltd Consulting Ltd)	1,696.46
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of signage	13.42
Middle Level Commissioners - Install gates at pumping station (Account from L R Boons)	829.38
Middle Level Commissioners - Chemical weed control of District Drains	784.97
Information Commissioner - Data Protection Registration renewal	52.00
EDF Energy - Electricity supply	3,732.96
British Gas - Electricity supply	2,577.74
	47,894.52

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

Appendix 2

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2026
GENERAL FUND

2026				2025		
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year			Apr-01	Balance brought forward	221,147.64
	Precept		2,093.29	2026		
	Insurances	1,573.59		Mar-31	Rate income & Special levy	10,742.93
	Repairs & Renewals	6,053.64			Interest on Deposit Accounts	2,596.05
	Fuel	3,908.78			Highland Water contributions -	
	Drainworks	13,584.37			Received	2,723.25
	Administration charge, Audit fee,				Consents	100.00
	printing, stationery, advertising etc	12,185.64	37,306.02		Development Charges Account	3,895.00
					Rents - Pillards Corner	25,305.67
	Improvement Works				Write back of provisions	0.00
	- Refurbishment of Control Panel		1,611.16		Storm Recovery Grant - T2A	1,611.16
	- Access Improvements		2,990.00		Storm Recovery Grant - T2B	2,990.00
	Balance carried forward		227,111.23			
			271,111.70			271,111.70

BALANCE SHEET
Capital Section

Liabilities			Assets		
Capital Provisions Account	1,155,001.00		Land at Pillards Corner	500,000.00	
			Pumping Station	655,000.00	
		1,155,001.00	Pump Assets	1.00	1,155,001.00

Revenue Section

General Fund	227,111.23	Ratepayers Account - Arrears		8.13
Development Charges Account	83,894.93	Value added Tax - Refunds due		4,515.48
Sundry Creditors	20,278.08	Sundry debtors		534.00
Option Agreement on sale of Land	5,000.00	Balance in hand -		
		Barclays - Treasurer's Account	20,001.05	
		Barclays - Business Premium Account	305,220.73	
		National Savings - Treasurer's Account	6,004.85	331,226.63
	1,491,285.24			1,491,285.24

March Third District Drainage Commissioners

Barclays - Treasurers Account 2025/2026

1st April 2025			31st March 2026	
Balance brought forward		306,424.54	Payments made during the year	47,894.52
31st March 2026				
Receipts during the year				
Clerk's collection account	63,287.42			
Interest on deposit accounts	3,404.34	66,691.76	Balance carried forward	325,221.78
		373,116.30		**373,116.30**

National Savings - Treasurers Account 2025/2026

1st April 2025		31st March 2026	
Balance brought forward	5,945.40	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2026			
Interest on deposit accounts	59.45	Balance carried forward	6,004.85
	6,004.85		**6,004.85**

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2026

Barclays Bank PLc

Current Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2026	20,001.05
Less unpresented cheques	0.00
Add outstanding lodgements	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	**20,001.05**

Cash balances as at 31st March 2026

Barclays Bank PLc

Current Account	**20,001.05**
Business Premium Account	**305,220.73**
Treasury Deposit	**0.00**

National Savings

Investment Account per passbook as at 31st March 2026	**6,004.85**
Total reconciled cash balances per accounts	**331,226.63**

March Third DDC
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2026

				Per Annual Return
Line 1	**Balances brought forward**			
	General Fund	221,147.64		
	Development charges account	73,919.46		
	Option Agreement	5,000.00		
			300,067.10	**300,067**
Line 2	**Rates and Special Levies**			
	Agricultural rates	1,035.72		
	Special Levies	9,702.00		
	Penalty	5.94		
	Costs	0.00		
	Write-off	-0.73		
			10,742.93	**10,743**
Line 3	**Total other receipts**			
	Interest			
	General fund	2,596.05		
	Development charges account	867.74		
	Consent applications	100.00		
	Rent and wayleaves	25,305.67		
	Highland Water	2,723.25		
	Discharge contributions	14,477.20		
	Write back of provisions	0.00		
	Storm Recovery Grant	4,601.16		
			50,671.07	**50,671**
Line 4	**Staff costs**			
	Wages/salaries	0.00		
	National insurance contributions	0.00		
	Pension costs	0.00		
	Travelling expenses	0.00		
			0.00	**0**
Line 5	**Loan repayments**			
	PWLB - Principal	0.00		
	PWLB - Interest	0.00		
			0.00	**0**

March Third DDC
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2026

				Per Annual Return
Line 6	**All other payments**			
	Precept	2,093.29		
	Rates, insurances, telephones	1,573.59		
	Repairs and renewals	6,053.64		
	Fuel	3,908.78		
	Drainworks	13,584.37		
	Administration	12,185.64		
	Development charges fees	1,474.47		
	Improvement Works	4,601.16		
			45,474.94	**45,475**
Line 7	**Balances carried forward**			
	General Fund	227,111.23		
	Development charges account	83,894.93		
	Option Agreement	5,000.00		
			316,006.16	**316,006**

Reconciliation
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6 316,006.16

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures **must** agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	269,217	300,067	*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	6,983	10,743	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	78,300	50,671	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	54,433	45,475	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	300,067	316,006	*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	312,370	331,227	*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	1,159,480	1,159,480	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?			*For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 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.

AkWool

Date 23 04 2026

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

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	13
Meeting:	**MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD**
Date:	**Thursday 7th May 2026**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider the Finance Officer's summary
B. Fees, remuneration and subscriptions inc Farm Business Tenancies x 2 & Rental of Land at Pillard's Corner
C. Fees, remuneration and subscriptions
D. Note the Precept to the Environment Agency
E. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2025/2026
F. Review & Approve Rating Estimates for 2026/2027
G. Consider & approve the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2026/2027
H. Note that we will be introducing a consistent naming convention for MLC and IDB Reserves during 2026/27, this will include some rationalisation of funds.

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

The rating estimates for 2026/2027 are made up of standard budget provisions and the engineers estimate for drain maintenance works for the coming year.

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 2026 with no current indications of possible unit costs, especially with the current uncertainty because of the conflicts within the middle east. The provision is therefore an estimate of pumping volumes at an estimate of possible new contract rates (15% increase on 2025/26 rates). Members should therefore consider if they think the provision is reasonable when setting the rate. The Board also need to consider any increase in Contractor costs also with higher Fuel costs again as result of the conflict in the Middle Ease.

When considering the rate for 2026/2027 members should also consider likely future capital investment requirements at the pumping stations.

The estimated expenditure for the year is £10,739, equivalent to a rate of 2.00p, the rate for 2025/2026 also being 2.00p.

1. Fees, Remunerations and Subscriptions

1.1 To consider the District Officer's fee for the ensuing year.
The sum of £1,965.00 was allowed for services of the District Officer for 2025/26

1.2 Rental of land at Pillard's Corner

2. Precept to the Environment Agency

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

2.2 The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2026.

The precept for 2025 was £2,093.29.

3. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2025/2026:

3.1 Annual Return 2025/2026:

To consider the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st of March 2026 and the completion of Section 2 of the Annual Return as required in the Audit Regulations. Appendix 3

4. Estimates for 2026/27

4.1 The estimated budget for 2026/27 is shown in Appendix 1.

4.2 The Board are reminded that it is standard practice to budget for an average year in terms of rainfall and associated pumping requirements.

5. Rate Requirements for 2026/27

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

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

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

Appendix 1 Estimates for 2026/27
Appendix 2 Rate Requirements for 2026/27

Appendix 1

MARCH THIRD DISTRICT DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET PROPOSAL - 2026/2027

		Approve budget 2025/2026 £	Actual 2025/2026 £	Proposed budget 2026/2027 £
1	Insurances	1,407	1,574	1,731 [A]
2	Repairs and renewals	3,668 [B]	6,054 [C]	2,825
3	Fuel	6,750 D	3,909 [C]	5,500 [D]
4	Drainworks (including Mole catching, District Officer's fee and Environmental measures)	18,100 [E]	13,584	16,750 [E]
5	Administration charge, Health and Safety contract, Audit fee, printing, stationery, advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities subscriptions etc	11,345	12,186	12,750
6	Precept	2,093	2,093	2,135
7	Improvement works	-	4,601	-
		43,363	44,000	41,691
	LESS Rents, Deposit Accounts interest etc	30,625	39,221 [F]	30,953 [H]
		12,738	4,779	10,739
	Use of Balances for Works at P/S	(2,000)	-	- [I]
		10,738	4,779	10,739

Remarks

A - Includes estimate for increased premiums

B - Includes provision for:
Motor re-wind 2,000

C - Includes provision for:
Level Controller/Telemetry Commissioning 2,527
Supply and Install Fuse Switch 1,135

D - Provision based upon 3 year average usage plus estimate for increase in new rates from October 2026 (15%)

E - Includes engineers items 9,160
N.B. Contractor prices have been based on 'Pre Conflict' prices, no allowance has been made for potential higher fuel costs.

F - Includes:
Highland water claims 2,723
Bank interest 2,596
Rents 25,306

G - Includes provision for:
Highland water claims 3,153
Bank interest 2,500
Rental Income 25,300

Appendix 2

March Third District Drainage Commissioners

Rate and levy requirements

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2026/2027 is: -

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 9.65%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to Fenland District Council – 90.35%.

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £518.

In 2026/2027 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £5,369.

Revenue balance as of 31st March 2026 is - £227,111

The estimated net expenditure of £10,738 in 2026/2027 is equivalent to: -

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 2.00p and

b) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £9,702

In 2025/2026 a rate of 0.20p in the £ was raised together with a Special levy of £9,702 on Fenland District Council.
Members should give consideration to future likely rates and capital expenditure when setting the rate for 2026/2027.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Commissioners

7th May 2026