

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	MARCH FIFTH DDC (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Wednesday 15th April 2026	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. Authorise the Chairman and Vice Chairman to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board with advice from MLC.**
- B. Consider if it wants to progress with the System Study or to revise the project to an asset refurbishment project,**
- C. Consider the recommendations for the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and grant funding and to confirm acceptance of recommendations to the Consulting Engineer.**

1. Enforcement & Compliance Overview

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

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

Cases already concluded:

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

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

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

2. Summary of Key Planning Issues

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

Refer to Appendix 2 for more details.

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. New FCERM grant funding guidance

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

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

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

Project types that are eligible for grant funding include:

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

Asset Refurbishment Projects

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

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

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

Under the 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.

The Board had a project "March Fifth DDC System Study" identified on the FCERM investment programme with an indicative allocation of £50,000 for 26/27. However, the EA indicated at the January 2026 RFCC meeting that this allocation has been deferred.

The Board is asked to:

- **Consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement taking account of the recommendations made in the M&E Report in Appendix 4,**
- **Consider if it wants to progress with the System Study or to revise the project to an asset refurbishment project,**
- **Liaise with the Consulting Engineer to determine project suitability and timescales,**
- **Consider and agree to making a contribution towards the project costs to aid funding prioritisation, and**
- **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 & Planning issues

Appendix 3: Operational Services Report

Appendix 4: M&E Report

Appendix 1

March Fifth District Drainage Commissioners															
Capital Improvement Programme (2026/2027)		PREVIOUS YEAR	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	
North Creek P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0	3000.0	
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	74.6	
	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	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	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	
South Creek P/S	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0	3000.0	
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	4.6	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	74.6	
	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	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	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	
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	
Drainage Channels															
		9.2	0.0	0	0	0	70	70	0	0	0	0	6,000	6,149	

There have been 15 planning applications responded to since the last meeting.

There have been 3 applications for Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) granted since the last meeting.

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

There have been 4 infiltration device applications acknowledged since the last meeting.

Planning issues

Rising main replacement

In early Autumn 2024, Anglian Water Services Ltd., replaced a rising main from their booster station at Riverdown, at March Water Recycling Centre (WRC), alongside Creek Fen Road – an initial application to replace the c.3km long rising main was rejected as a result.

The matter has now been resolved. Surveyors returned to site to realign the main 20m away from the Old River Nene and directional drilling levels of 2.5-3m below hard beds of IDB drains was adhered to.

The contractor had some issues when laying new pipe across the IDB drain close to South Creek Pumping Station and caused damage to the bank/bed of the drain. This was repaired under guidance of the Consulting Engineer.

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	MARCH FIFTH DDC	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: OPERATIONAL SERVICES
Date:	Wednesday 15 th April 2026	Officer Responsible:	Morgan Lakey

1. Weed Control & Drain Maintenance

The maintenance and drain works carried out last year generally accorded with the recommendations approved by the Commissioners at their last Annual Meeting.

Harrison Agricultural Contractors carried out the Commissioners' flail mowing requirements last season and have indicated that they are available to undertake them again for the ensuing year. A sum for the completion of flail mowing district drains has been included within the estimate.

Following previous years' requirements and with the Commissioners' approval, the Commissioners' drains immediately upstream of North and South Creek Pumping Stations, reaches 1-2-3 and 20-21, were included in the annual machine cleansing programme. This action was deemed necessary to reduce the mass of aquatic weed required to be manually cleaned from the Pumping Stations' weedscreens. It is recommended that a sum is allowed for both reaches to be included again in this year's machine cleansing programme.

The proposed machine cleansing works to the Foxglove Way area were successfully completed last year under favourable ground conditions, following the long dry summer. The removal and disposal of the arisings was carried out under the D1 exemption, as we have done previously when machine cleansing in this area. However, this year there was some queries from the Environment Agency and further clarification of the permit exceptions will be required before planning future works in this area.



The Middle Level was successful in securing funding from the Government's Tranche 2 scheme, allowing for improvement works at IDB Pumping Stations, for the deployment of mobile pumps in the event of a breakdown. A hard standing area has been installed at South Creek Pumping Station, improving access at the pump and a suitable area should a mobile pump be required.

A pre-harvest district inspection last summer indicated that a majority of the Commissioners' district drains were in a satisfactory condition and being maintained to a good standard. Drains requiring aquatic herbicide applications were identified and included with the Foxglove Way drains that were programmed for machine cleansing.

A recent joint inspection of the Commissioners' district drains was undertaken with the Chairman. The inspection indicated that majority of drains are currently in a satisfactory condition, however as the Commissioners' annual meeting falls during the early part of the growing season a subsequent district inspection will be required during the summer months to accurately identify any additional drain maintenance requirements.

North Creek Pumped System

The Commissioner's drains within the North Creek area are in a generally satisfactory condition, however sporadic stands of emergent aquatic vegetation are evident throughout the North West drains around the Flaggrass Hill area. It is recommended that reaches 26-33-34-35-36-37 and 26-27-28-29-30-31-32 are included in this year's machine cleansing programme. Herbicide application will be carried out prior to the proposed machine cleansing works and to any other Commissioner's drains where it is required. A provisional sum has been included in the estimated costs for the proposed works to be completed and the plan on the following page shows the extent of the works and their locations.

The collapsed Badger setts and small areas of bank subsidence identified on reaches 24-25-26 have not deteriorated any further and have naturally begun to self-heal and will be regularly monitored and any remedial works required, programmed in to be completed in-line with ecological guidelines.

South Creek Pumped System

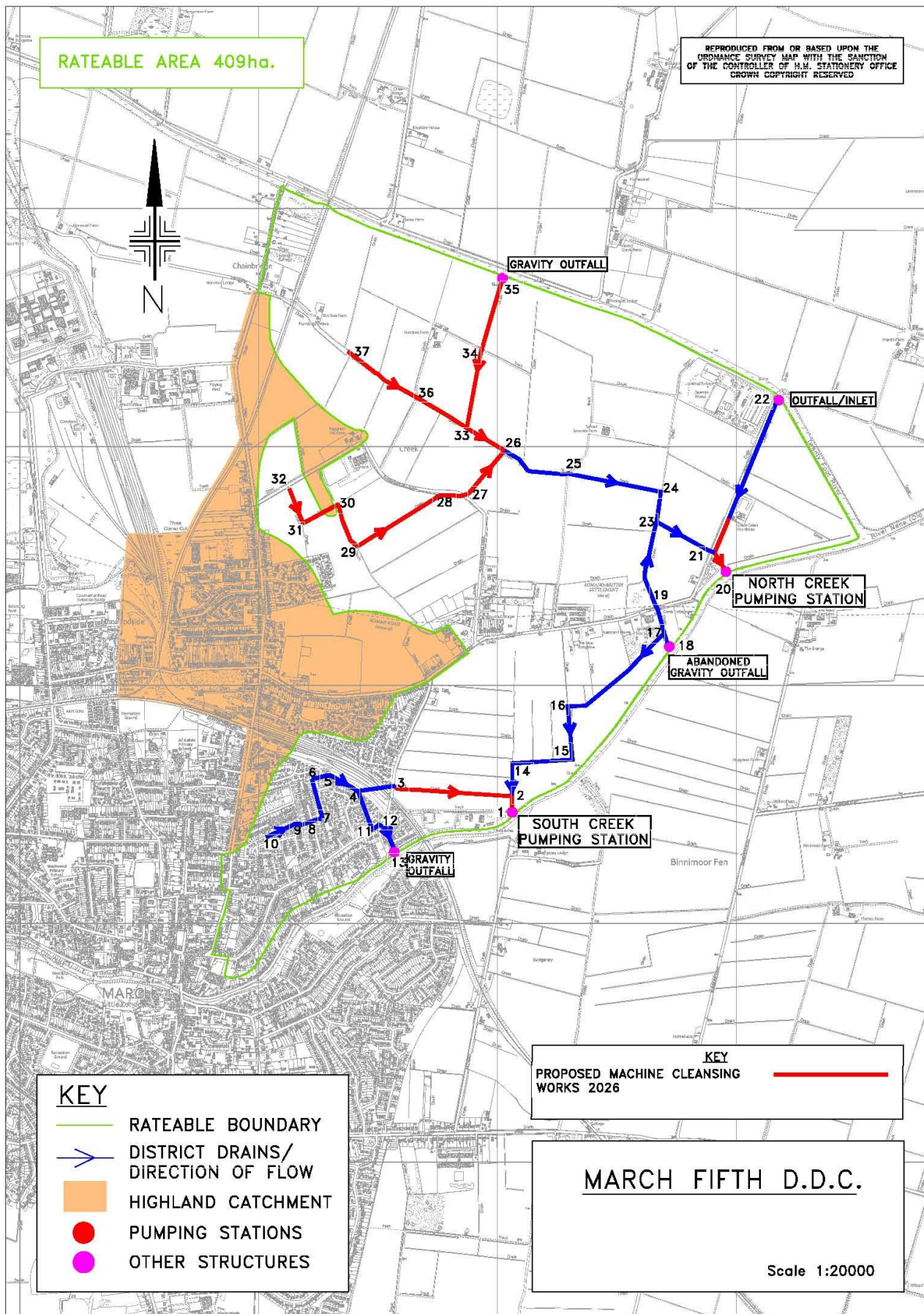
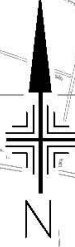
The recent inspection indicated that the Commissioner's drains within the South Creek area are currently in a good condition. Historically district drains in the South Creek area have been prone to late occurring infestations of submerged weed growth, most notably semi-buoyant Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). The annual cleansing of this area has dramatically reduced this issue, however, as mentioned previously reach 1-2-3 will be included in the machine cleansing programme to prevent future issues with large accumulations of aquatic weed at the manually cleaned weedscreen.

Creek Road/Newlands Avenue/Foxglove Way – Gravity System

Watercourses in the Foxglove Way area remain in a good condition following last year's machine cleansing works and it is pleasing to report only small amounts of windblown litter and debris are visible within the drain. It is envisaged regular visual inspections of drains will continue for the next season to ensure any domestic or household debris being fly tipped into the Commissioner's watercourse can be dealt with swiftly and to monitor for potential recolonisation of any invasive, non-native aquatic vegetation.

RATEABLE AREA 409ha.

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2. Estimated Costs of Drain Maintenance and Weed Control Programme

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

North & South Creek Pumped System

		£	
1.	Flail mowing District drains	Item	Sum
			3200.00
2.	Application of Roundup to control emergent weed and reed	Item	Sum
			900.00
3.	Machine Cleanse Reaches	M	£
	26-27-28-29-30-31-32	1500	1.50
	33-34-35	650	1.50
	26-36-37	675	1.50
			2250.00
			975.00
			1012.50
4.	Machine cleanse Pump Drains		
	North Creek	Item	Sum
	South Creek	Item	Sum
			250.00
			500.00
5.	<u>Provisional Item</u>		
	Allowance for any culvert clearance, bank slip repair, emergency or additional machine cleansing that may be deemed necessary later in the year	Item	Sum
			1200.00
6.	Fees for inspection, preparation and submission of report to the Commissioners, arrangements and supervision of herbicide applications and maintenance works	Item	Sum
			1200.00
TOTAL			£11,487.50

Orders for the application of herbicides by the MLC are accepted on condition that they will not be held responsible for the failure or efficacy of any treatment.

Author Name: Morgan Lakey BSc
Role: Operations Manager

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	8
Meeting:	MARCH FIFTH DDC	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Wednesday 15 th April 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 each of the stations is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition. The stations 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 are examples of pump bolts from other stations 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	Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul	Controls	Bars	Telemetry
North Creek	1976	1990	1990	1976	1976	2023
South Creek	1976	2005	2005	2005	1976	2023

The Key Health Indicators table above shows the critical areas for concern and improvement is the pumps and the control panel at North Creek. The pumps range from 20 to 35 years old with last refurbishments ranging from 20 to 35 years ago. The Board is advised to develop and start a pump refurbishment/replacement plan for the 2 pumps that are overdue 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.

1.2 North Creek

The control panel is from 1976 and should be replaced, similar control panels at other sites have been in the region of £15k to £20k. The canister pump is from 1990 and we have no records of overhaul during this time. Plans should be put in place for its replacement. Pumps of this type are likely to be in the region of £30k to £40k. The insulation readings for the pump do not cause concern but with pumps of this age they can deteriorate quickly when seals fail.

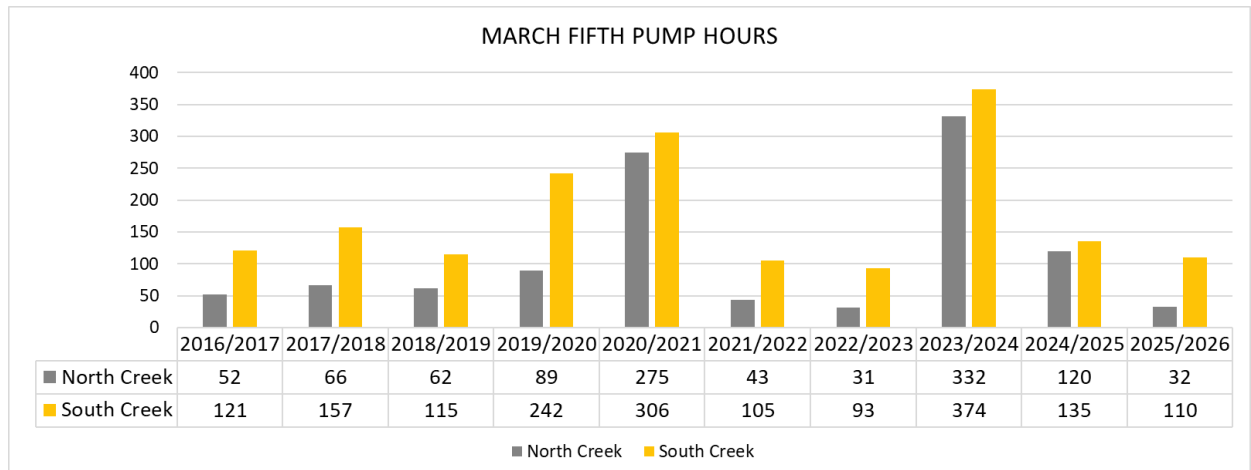
The last Routine Inspection at North Creek Pump Station took place on 7th January 2026. Recommendations / remarks include requires offset programming on telemetry for accurate water level readings (Station 98.97 / Telemetry 98.71). Recommend new pump panel due to age of the electrical equipment. New 4ft Tubelight required/recommended. Pump run light smashed.

1.3 South Creek

The control panel is from 2005 and is in satisfactory condition. It would benefit from the exterior metal cabinet being updated to provide better protection for the panel and to allow the panel to be worked on in wet conditions if necessary. The submersible pump is from 2005 and we have no records of overhaul during this time. Plans should be put in place for its replacement. Pumps of this type are likely to be in the region of £40k to £50k. The insulation readings for the pump do not cause concern but with pumps of this age they can deteriorate quickly when seals fail.

The last Routine Inspection at South Creek Pump Station took place on 7th January 2026. Recommendations/remarks include: 1) Minor oil leak visible on UK Power Transformer – needs attention from UKPN. 2) Subsidence around power pole – needs attention from UKPN. Cabinet heavily corroded allowing ingress of vermin – recommend replacement cabinet. No access to check outlet – overgrown.

2. Pumping summary



3. Inspections

The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) were carried out at both North & South Creek Pump Stations on 29th March 2024 and both sites are in a satisfactory condition.

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