



middle level
commissioners

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862

Standing Advice Note MLC001:

Middle Level System Flood and Drainage Infrastructure Capacity

Issued: April 2026 (Version 2)

Key messages

- A. Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) and associated Internal Drainage Board (IDB) flood and drainage infrastructure is considered as operating at or beyond its design capability, standard and capacity (particularly during October to April).**
- B. Unless there is a compelling exception case, we will not consent to discharges greater than greenfield run-off rate and/or any new water entering our catchment across a watershed.**
- C. We consider that the cumulative impact of attenuating surface water from developments and timing of discharges has been to elongate the duration that our system is under stress. This increases our operational costs and could increase the risk of flooding.**
- D. We are concerned that there is seemingly no post-construction review of SuDS against their design and performance reviews through their lifecycle. Therefore, even well-designed SuDS may not be performing as expected/consented and there may be a cumulative impact of this across our catchment. Long term appropriate maintenance and inspection is considered a deficiency.**
- E. The opportunity to release stored water into our system during May to September should be actively explored within strategic flood risk assessments, development masterplans and local flood risk management strategies and in consultation with our engineers.**
- F. In considering and granting planning permission, Local Planning Authorities need to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development upon their special levy.**
- G. Prior to granting outline planning permission, Local Planning Authorities must consider whether any proposed Biodiversity Net Gain provisions will be compatible with the flood risk management activities undertaken by MLC and other IDBs, for the full 30-year registration period. If this is not known, the LPA should seek advice from MLC prior to granting outline planning permission.**
- H. The Environment Agency needs to understand, consider and acknowledge the potential impact of new development and sub-optimal SuDS on the Highland Water claims from the Middle Level Commissioners.**
- I. As statutory consultees and fellow Risk Management Authorities under the Flood & Water Management Act, Lead Local Flood Authorities and the Environment Agency need to consider and reflect this advice within their responses to Local Planning Authorities so as not to increase flood risk within the Middle Level.**
- J. Developers and Local Planning Authorities ought to consider the adoption of measures such as rainwater harvesting and re-use to avoid as much water as possible from entering the drainage network.**

- K. When considering abstraction licenses for unrestricted winter fill applications from irrigators within the Middle Level catchment, the Environment Agency should take account of the potential benefit to the capacity of the system, operational costs, Highland Water costs and their responsibility to reduce flood risk within their determinations.
- L. When addressing historic misconnections to the foul sewer network and changing discharges of treated effluent, Anglian Water, Highways Authorities and Local Authorities must consider the potential impact on the surface water drainage network and receiving system. Prior consent from MLC and/or an IDB may be required.

Advice Primarily For:

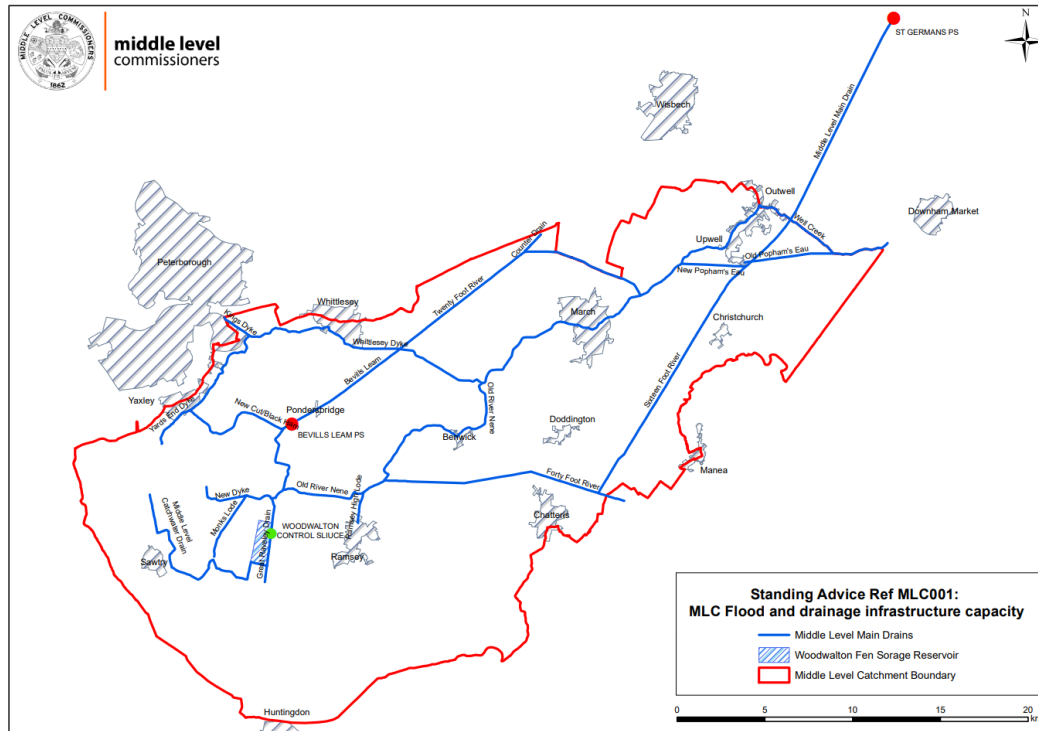
- **Local Planning Authorities (LPAs):** Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council, Peterborough City Council
- **Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs):** Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Norfolk County Council
- **Minerals & Waste Planning Authorities:** Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council
- **Highways Authorities:** National Highways, Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council
- **Environment Agency**
- **Anglian Water**
- **Developers**
- **Internal Drainage Boards within the Middle Level catchment area**

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Geographical coverage:

MLC

The Middle Level catchment boundary plus areas where there is the potential through development to transfer water across the watershed into the Middle Level.



IDBs within/linked to the Middle Level (administered by MLC)

