SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board
Held at the Chatteris Cricket Club on Thursday 22nd May 2025.

PRESENT

M Latta (Chair)	E Jackson
C Lee (Vice-Chair)	M Jackson
R Angood	R Lee
C Baker	J Sole
S Criswell (HDC)	P Sole
T Edgley	E Veal
M Heading	W Veal

Mrs Ruth Martin (Lead Clerk) representing the Clerk and Ms Sofi Lloyd, Ecology and Environmental Services Manager were in attendance.

B.2385 Inspection of the Pumping Station

The Board were joined by Zack Robinson, the new District Officer and he was introduced to the Board. The Chair advised that he wants the Board to visit the pumping station every year. He advised that the bungalow has now been let and new fencing has been installed. The gate at the bottom of the garden has been removed so that there is no longer access directly from the bungalow to the pumping station, and a new gateway has been created at the front of the pumping station and gate fitted. The Chair updated the Board on the works that had been completed to the bungalow. He advised that the external lighting to the pumping station has also been improved.

The digger was viewed and the Board advised that a recent breakdown resulted in the seals on the ram being replaced under warranty. All the machinery is in good condition although the heater in the pumping station is still to be replaced. It is planned to install an outside tap that will allow for pressure washing of the digger.

The diesel pumps were reviewed and the Board advised that there is a leak on the suction side of pump 2. Mr Robinson has been trying to source parts for the pumps although this is becoming more difficult due to the age of the pumps.

The electric pumps were then viewed. Mr Robinson advised that there has been an issue with a sensor, and the Chair advised that there is no level board on the Board's side and so he has instructed Mr Robinson to arrange for the sensors to be repaired and for a level board to be installed.

The Chair observed that much of the equipment is at the end of its design life, and that although it is all in good working order, it is dated and requires significant maintenance. He asked the Board to bear this in mind when they later discuss these items.

The newly installed CCTV cameras and lighting were reviewed, and it was agreed that an additional camera would be installed. Ms Lloyd drew the Boards attention to the barn owl box that had been installed on the pump house that was now home to bats and advised the Board to do nothing further with the box.

The Chair reminded the Board that it is 10 years since the basin has been desilted and that it needs to be addressed. A long reach and amphibious digger was used last time and worked well. The Board considered where arisings could be placed.

Drainworks across the district were considered, with Mr P Sole requesting that spoil be spread further the previously. It was agreed that a dumper and bulldozer with low loader could be hired in for a few days in order to do this. The Chair reminded the Board that they were not obliged to do this, but he felt that it was the right thing to do. The Board agreed with the Chair.

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced Mr Zack Robinson, the Board's District Officer, and Ms Sofi Lloyd, the Middle Level's Ecology and Environmental Services Manager.

Apologies for absence were received from A Allan, D Griffiths and R Smith.

B.2386 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.

The Chair and Mr Heading declared an interest (as a member of the Middle Level Board) on any matters relating to the Middle Level.

Mr P Sole declared an interest in planning applications received for A Sole & Son and Mr P Sole.

B.2387 Minutes of last meeting

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 16th January 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.2388 Matters Arising

The Chair advised that following the last meeting the District Officer continues to check the meter readings on the Block Fen discharge points, and that the readings are being received. He has also been made aware of a possible new discharge point from the Tarmac quarry at Block Fen, which he will investigate with the District Officer.

There were no other matters arising.

B.2389 Constitution & Membership
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**4**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Polly Tombleson**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the current status of its membership and the role they each play as members serving the interests of the Board.
B. Review attendance records and identify any resolutions as necessary.
C. There are currently **0** vacancies
D. To consider previous discussions of amalgamation – SM, MWe & Up.
E. Reinforce the need for members to view all five 'Good Governance' videos.
F. Identify any topic areas for additional training, as well as any inspection/site visit requirements.

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	16	N/A		8
Actual	16	1 HDC	17	
Vacancies	0		0	

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

No	Name	Status (one of four categories)	Commentary
1	A Allan	Nominee of ratepayer (Allan Partners)	
2	R Angood	Ratepayer	
3	T Edgley	Nominee of ratepayer (R A Latta Farms Ltd)	
4	D Griffiths	Nominee of Ratepayer (Mick George Ltd)	
5	M Heading	Ratepayer	
6	M Jackson	Nominee of ratepayer (DJ & MO Jackson)	
7	M Latta	Ratepayer	Chairman
8	C Lee	Nominee of ratepayer (P J Lee & Sons)	Vice-Chair
9	R Lee	Nominee of ratepayer (P J Lee & Sons)	
10	R Smith	Ratepayer	
11	J Sole	Nominee of ratepayer (A Sole & Son)	
12	P Sole	Nominee of ratepayer (A Sole & Son)	
13	E Veal	Ratepayer	
14	W Veal	Ratepayer	
15	C Baker	Nominee of ratepayer (A G Heading)	
16	E Jackson	Nominee of ratepayer (DJ & MO Jackson)	

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, eg major infrastructure, commerce, community groups, environmental interests.

No	Name	Appointing Council	Commentary (one of three categories)
1	Stephen Criswell	HDC	Councillor
2			

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	16/01/2025	23/05/2024	23/05/2024	18/01/2024
1	A Allan	Apologies	Present	Present	Present
2	R Angood	Present	Present	Present	Present
3	C Baker	Present	Present	Present	N/A
4	T Edgley	Present	Present	Present	Present
5	D Griffiths	Present	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	M Heading	Apologies	Present	Present	Apologies
7	E Jackson	Present	Present	Present	N/A
8	M Jackson	Present	Present	Present	Present
9	M Latta	Present	Present	Present	Present
10	C Lee	Present	Present	Present	Present
11	R Lee	Present	Present	Present	Present
12	R Smith	Present			Present
13	J Sole	Present			Present
14	P Sole	Present	Present	Present	Present
15	E Veal	Present			Present
16	W Veal	Present	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies

Attendance at Chairs Meetings

No	Name	6/12/2024	6/10/2023	13/12/2022	12/4/2022
1	M Latta	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended

Appointed Members (current and previous)

No	Name (Council)	16/01/2025	23/05/2024	18/01/2024	25/5/2023
1	Stephen Criswell HDC	Present	Present	Present	Apologies
2					
3					

3. Elections, vacancies & appointments

3.1 Next Election will be in 2026.

4. Composition and amalgamations

4.1 The Clerk to report on discussions regarding a possible amalgamation between – SM, MWe & Up.

5. Training

5.1 All Members are asked to digest the Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards published by the Association of Drainage Authorities and view the five accompanying videos intended to bring the guide to life. They are available via https://middlelevel.gov.uk/about/idb-governance/

5.2 To date 0 of 15 Board Members have reported viewing all five videos.
To date 7 of 15 Board Members have reported viewing 2 of the 5 videos.

5.3 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.

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

Author Name: Polly Tombleson
Role: Senior Business Support Officer

Vacancies and Elections

Mrs Martin advised the Board that there are currently no vacancies. The next Elections will be in 2026.

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.

B.2390 Clerk's Report

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**5**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**CLERK'S REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the content of the report and feedback on items as appropriate.

1. Charging for Planning & Consenting

As previously reported, we have for a long time been reactive and had insufficient resources to cater for the amount and range of planning and consenting workload for the Commissioners and IDBs with an inability to step back and identify and implement improvements. Our reputation has suffered, and we receive regular complaints.

With new leadership capacity and capability within Technical Services, we are now in a healthier position to identify and drive improvements. A key foundation of improvement is a review and implementation of our charging approach for developers and consent applicants. We have identified that we are significantly out of sync with neighbours and have likely been missing out on substantial income over many years. This is income that could in part be reinvested into developing our capacity and capability to improve our service, as well as contributing to asset improvement budgets.

The Board is asked to support the need to review our charging model to maximise income. The new model will be implemented from the 1st April 2025. This will be reviewed annually, and the Clerk invites feedback.

2. **Highland Water & IDB Precept.**

A formal appeal to the Minister under Section 57 (4) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 was thankfully narrowly avoided in 2024/25 given that the Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) agreed a one-off approach to covering the shortfall in the Environment Agency's budget to ensure highland water claims (HWC) to local IDBs were met.

In addition, the Environment Agency's HWC budget for 2025/26 was increased from that which was indicatively allocated. Had the indicative allocation stood, the forecast budget shortfall would have essentially resulted in the Environment Agency imposing an active withdrawal of management of a number of districts and the Middle Level catchment without any underpinning consultation with those affected, impact assessment, any clear policy position or procedure.

However, without a programme of reform and mitigations, we will potentially be in an appeal situation at some not too distant point in the future. The time that would have been spent drafting and lodging an appeal has been used more constructively to develop 'The Highland Water Conundrum' document. This has been submitted to the Minister, Defra, the Environment Agency and our Local Authorities.

There are a range of measures that are outside of the control or influence of ourselves and IDBs that would make a positive difference. I have identified these as recommendations within the document. Many of these recommendations are for the Environment Agency to consider and implement as appropriate. I would be happy to discuss further and contribute directly to any reviews that take account of this matter.

We feel that it is unfair that HWC payments are under threat without mitigations being available that provide us and IDBs with a greater degree of control, influence and/or choice. We and IDBs have no choice but to receive and manage water that flows into our/their districts from highland areas. We/they are providing a public service to beneficiaries within (and of) highland areas and we/they have no choice to not provide this service.

The 'Highland Water Conundrum' document is available to Middle Level Board Members and Commissioners upon request.

3. Insurance

Our insurance has been arranged using Towergate insurance brokers for the year to 31*st* March 2025. AXA offered a 2-year extension of the tripartite agreement we had previously signed and this was accepted as they offered to keep our business combined policy premium at the same rate for 2025-2026, subject to there not being any changes to the existing cover, i.e. increase in valuations.

Covering MLC and our administered IDBs, the business combined policy premium has increased this year by £16,875, due to the significant increase in pumping station valuations following the meetings last year. The fleet policy premium has also increased considerably due to the both the number and size of claims during the year, together with there being additional vehicles and plant. We have been warned that AXA capped the increase in the fleet premium, but if this had gone out to tender would probably have been in the region of £110,000 plus 12% Insurance Premium Tax. This equates to an increase of £68,000.

More concerningly, AXA will no longer be offering a specific policy for IDBs going forward so this is likely to have a significant impact on the premium for 2026-2027 as there are only a few insurance companies that will quote for our business. NFU have declined to quote.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

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.

Mr Criswell said that there are increasing pressures being put onto developers, including looking for more biodiversity nett gain in developments, and consideration of viability being key. This may bring more challenges as more sites become available to developers. The Chair advised that the Board are looking to recover their costs even if development does not go ahead. Mrs Martin advised that enforcement and recovery also form part of the new model and that any unconsented work will be dealt with more effectively. Mr Angood observed that the Middle Level Planning and Consenting process has seen a lot of changes, with lots of development getting through in the past as Middle Level have not been able to respond. However, this has now promoted earlier developer contact and this is a positive step.

Mr Heading arrived at the meeting.

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 reminded the Board that they had agreed to delegate the decision as to whether to appeal against the increased payment to the Clerk acting with the Chair, but that no appeal had been lodged to date.

Insurance

Mrs Martin drew the Board to the reporting of the potential increase in insurance premiums from 2026-27 due to the issues identified in the Clerks report. Mr Angood asked if this was due to the size of claims, but it was generally understood that it was due to the risks that Internal Drainage Boards present.

Fens Reservoir

Mrs Martin gave a short verbal update, advising that legal representation has now been secured. The Board have previously agreed to act with the Middle Level and other impacted IDBs and this is now moving forward.

B.2391 Environment Officers' Report
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	6
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Sofi Lloyd**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the updated Environmental Services Package will take effect from April 2025.
B. Be informed that an environmental review and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) update meeting has taken place and the new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and polices are being drawn up for acceptance. Please make interim provision for the new BAP to be reviewed, agreed and adopted prior to the next Board meeting.
C. Note that the new Hedgerow Regulations 2024 prohibits the cutting of any hedge growing on agricultural land between the 1st March - 31th August inclusive.
D. Please contact the ecology team ASAP to book a survey of any trees that require felling or trimming this year as this is the best time of year to survey for bats.
E. Be reminded that any non-routine maintenance including bank slip repairs or reprofiling, culvert installation or replacements, tree felling, established scrub removal and channel de-watering require environmental screening well ahead of the planned works, to ensure works are compliant, using the request form available on the MLC website: Conservation – Middle Level
F. Be aware that you will require licenced supervision of certain works that take place around badger setts, which MLC can provide.
G. Note that a Board Representative will be required to attend a biodiversity training day in 2025. Those who have some control over the works undertaken within the district is best placed to attend.
H. A reminder that the Board has a culverting policy and a presumption against culverting unless no other feasible option is available: Standing Advice – Middle Level.
I. Report bank slips that require remedial works as soon as they occur or are noticed.
J. Review the water vole myth busting summary attached as an Appendix to the Board Report.

1) Environmental Services Package Update

Further to the update and discussion at the Middle Level IDB Chairs meeting in December 2024, you will have seen and heard us over the previous 12 months, setting out our plans and reasoning for focussing, updating and re-defining the range of services that we provide to IDBs across and beyond the Middle Level. This will take time and the ambition is to have a catalogue defined and ready to implement on 1st April 2026.

However, within all our service provision it is ecological and environmental compliance that carries greatest risk to Boards, Board Members, Board employees, the Middle Level Commissioners and their staff. A step-change in service is overdue and we have been building towards this over the last two-years as reflected in the 2024/25 fee adjustment. Therefore, we plan to launch the new Environmental Services Package in 2025/26, as this will help IDBs to begin to significantly improve and evidence their environment compliance and delivery straight away. This also ensures that the Middle Level Commissioners are not under-writing other IDBs environmental responsibilities.

Background

Historically, IDBs have made a small contribution towards the MLC Environment Officers' salary to access ecological and environmental advice and guidance if required, in a mostly re-active manner. There has been little definition around what services have been included.

However, protecting and improving biodiversity and the environment are higher than ever on the political agenda, and the Government is looking for strong and proactive environmental delivery from Public Bodies to contribute towards their own challenging statutory environmental targets. As such, legislation and scrutiny has strengthened significantly around how IDBs deliver their statutory environmental duties. This is demonstrated by the recent changes to the information Defra requests via the IDB1 report.

Also, the general public is nowadays much better informed and aware of the state of nature and have more confidence in challenging IDBs about their environmental delivery and compliance. For these reasons, it is more important than ever for IDBs to be able to evidence how they have considered the environment when determining their approaches to flood risk and water level management.

Inevitably, this has meant that IDBs now require greater support to meet and evidence their statutory environmental duties. There has also been a growth in demand for suitably capable and qualified ecologists and the market hasn't kept pace with the demand, therefore salaries have increased similarly to other in-demand professional services. This also reflects that these days ecologists also take personal liability, thus if something goes wrong on their watch then, notwithstanding the responsibility and prosecution risk for IDB Board members, they can also be 'struck-off', a bit like doctors. They therefore need to be reassured about who they are working for and the associated commitment to compliance of the organisation.

Going forward

As outlined at the Chairs meeting in December 2024, we have developed an Environmental Service Package that aims to support IDBs to achieve minimum statutory environmental compliance. The details of the new package are set out below:

Environmental Services Package

Ref:	Category:	Details:	Days Equivalent:
1.	**General Consultancy** *(inc. retained service)*	Up to 2 days general consultancy which can be used for: • Screening and assessment of non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process. • Preliminary habitat and species surveys & reporting* • Ad-hoc advice and guidance. • Initial advice & communications for pollution incidents • INNS identification and advice. • Biodiversity Action Plan BAP ditch survey & reporting**	**2**
2.	**Environmental Compliance Health Checking**	• One environmental review with MLC Env. & Ecol. staff per year & subsequent reporting. • Review must include budget setting & expenditure recording for reporting to Defra (IDB1). • Review & assessment of proposed annual programme of works prior to Board approval. • BAP report & review for Board.	**1.25**
3.	**Planning Ecology Services**	• Up to 1 day for consent applications advice & guidance^ • Over 1 day will be charged on a time and materials basis. This includes responses to Local Plans and Strategies on the IDBs behalf.	**1**
4.	**Keeping up-to-date**	• Communication of relevant updates in policy, legislation, regulation and best practice.	**1**

5.	**Training**	• Attendance for up to 2 candidates at 1 environmental training day per year.	**1**
Total:			**6.25 days p.a.**
Cost (2025/26)			**£2,375**

Notes: *Any surveys or mitigations that follow on from preliminary surveys, including licenced work such as water vole displacement, will be charged on a time and materials basis or can be contracted out if MLC staff are fully booked.
** Any unused consultancy balance can be used to cover the recommended annual 1-day BAP ditch survey, with any shortfall charged separately. If any pre-works surveys (ESRs) are undertaken in the year, they will be extended so that they count as the BAP ditch survey for efficiency.
^ For activity not rechargeable to developers/consent applicants.
Unused category balances can be used to cover shortfalls in other categories within the financial year as mutually agreed.
Unused balances cannot be carried forward outside the financial year but its use can be discussed with MLC with potential for it to be used to contribute towards assisting the IDB to progress a BAP objective instead if capacity allows.
For IDBs who also contract operational services from MLC (via Morgan Lakey, Operations Manager), there will be a 16% reduction in fees, reflective of the efficiency gained from being able to integrate your environmental compliance procedures into our operational processes and communicate freely with your other service providers, taking the annual charge down to £1995 (2025/26).

We are confident that the above service provision will deliver the range of support that is most frequently requested and required by IDBs and reflects what is necessary to achieve and demonstrate minimum environmental compliance.

However, the minimum service package is not exhaustive and is not all-inclusive, therefore additional ad-hoc consultancy, charged on a time and materials basis will still be available if needed and where MLC staff capacity allows. This could include:

- Supervision of Licenced CL27 drainage operations over a badger sett
- Licenced protected species activities including water vole displacements and badger sett disturbance / closures etc.
- Habitat creation or enhancement consultancy and habitat condition assessments
- Invasive species control

Where we have insufficient capacity to deliver additional consultancy, we will be able to advise on your selection of third-party supplier and provide them with advice, however the IDB would take on the client role and be the organisation commissioning the supplier, overseeing their delivery and performance.

Benefits of a service provided by MLC

Our commitment is that our fees will remain not for profit and will be very competitive compared with peer IDBs and those of qualified external profit-making environmental consultants.

It is our intention that from 1st April 2025, the service package fees will be charged. For IDBs who also contract their operational services from us via Morgan Lakey, there will be a 16% reduction in fees, reflective of the efficiency gained from being able to integrate your environmental compliance procedures into our operational processes and communicate freely with your other service providers, taking the annual charge down to £1995.

IDB ecology and the IDB industry is quite niche (e.g. bespoke ecological and environmental licenses and permits). Our ecologists specialise in and represent the local and national IDB industry interests and challenge local and national policy where it is not enabling of our work. We have strength of voice in representing the largest number of IDBs in the country. An example of this is the successful legal challenge made to Natural England last year to clarify and amend the conditions within the IDB-specific badger licence (CL27) to make it more enabling of our routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This was not something that ADA, our national representative was able to progress for us, despite the implications for IDBs nationally.

Our ecologists also hold multiple IDB-relevant protected species licences and can carry out licenced activities most commonly required by IDBs for a much-reduced cost compared to an external ecological consultancy.

There are an increasing number of funding opportunities available for a wide range of environmental improvements, including those which could be of benefit to IDBs. This includes biodiversity net gain funding, peat conservation and developer contributions such as Section 106 funding. Many of these require use of local, regional and national networks, personal relationships and partnerships, along with a landscape scale view. We provide this as we invest in it to benefit the Middle Level Commissioners. We therefore can help IDBs to be better placed and more competitive to access such funding by evidencing their experience and competence in delivering positive outcomes for biodiversity in a consistent way and in partnership with other local environmental managers.

Some of the benefits you will have received to date from the ecology and environmental services department are not always visible and would be difficult for an external consultancy to replicate in the same efficient manner. A lot of work has taken place in the background to significantly improve the way that you can evidence your environmental compliance. This has included:

- Assessment of all relevant consent applications on behalf of many IDBs to ensure their statutory duties in relation to the environment are discharged and evidenced. This sometimes includes site visits, meetings and reports. It also includes the development and publication of new pre-application environmental guidance for consent applicants, for all IDBs.
- Influencing and contributing towards national, regional and local policy and strategy development. This includes wildlife licencing, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which IDBs have a statutory duty to consider, Local Plans, Fens Reservoir planning and Environmental Stewardship options which will benefit IDBs.
- New templates, processes and services available to all IDBs to help them deliver and evidence their environmental compliance in relation to non-routine works using the ESR (Environmental Screening Report) process.
- Development and launch of compliant standard operating procedures for routine works including flail mowing and desilting. Associated training provided to a number of IDB contractors.
- A retained ecological consultancy service (which you may have chosen not to use)
- Monitoring, influencing and communicating legislative changes that affect IDBs such as badger licenses and Hedgerow Regulations
- A scheduled environmental review and BAP refresh visit (the BAP is required to deliver an IDBs statutory biodiversity duty)

We hope that this has provided you with sufficient information regarding the new service package from 1st April 2025. I appreciate that the step-change in fee may not be universally well received by Board Members that are less engaged and aware of their personal and collective environmental liabilities and risks. We will work on the premise that your Board will opt in and engage with the Environmental Service Package. Indeed, it’s success and your compliance requires a two-way relationship and input.

You may choose to benchmark this package against other service providers and opt-out. If so, please feel free to use the information above to secure comparable quotes. You will also need to bear in mind the following:

- The additional Board members responsibilities and associated training and expertise required to become an intelligent client in commissioning ecological and environmental services. You need to know what service you are asking for and what standards are required.

- Alternative suppliers will likely still require inputs from Middle Level Commissioners staff which will be billed at an hourly rate and liaising with alternative suppliers may impact the cost, timeliness and quality of other services we provide your Board.

- Alternative suppliers will need to consider how they invest in the IDB sector locally, regionally and nationally and the myriad of partnership activity there is within and around the Middle Level.

Your clerk will need to be reassured that any alternative service provider will support and enable your environmental compliance to report on your behalf to Defra with due confidence.

We commit to reviewing the Service Package both qualitatively and quantitatively as it beds-in to ensure continued value for money for the IDBs and the Middle Level Commissioners.

2) The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024

In May 2024, Defra announced The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 which put the baseline for hedgerow management practices into law, and replaced the regulation of management previously provided for via cross compliance. The Regulations require:

- a 2-metre buffer strip, measured from the centre of a hedgerow, where a green cover must be established and maintained. Also, no cultivation or the application of pesticides or fertilisers should take place within this buffer strip;

- a hedgerow cutting ban from 1 March to 31 August (inclusive).

These Regulations apply to any hedgerow growing on land used for agriculture if that hedgerow has:

- a continuous length of 20 metres or more; or

- a continuous length of less than 20 metres and, at each end, meets (whether by intersection or junction) another hedgerow.

Please advise your workforce / contractors of the change and programme such works to take place within the compliant period: Hedgerow management rules: cutting and trimming - GOV.UK

3) Licensing of IDB works around badger setts.

Previously, MLC had planned to roll out training and licence administration services to enable all IDBs to access the CL27 Badger Licence and to conduct their routine and periodic maintenance work compliantly around badger setts. However there were some issues with licence returns in 2023 which highlighted some regional variation in the regulation and enforcement of CL27 licence requirements within Natural England, and some developing impractical licence requirements. MLC and representatives from 3 other IDBs made a successful legal challenge to Natural England regarding the issues and have secured some positive changes to the licence which are more enabling of our low-risk routine maintenance work taking place around badger setts. This has removed the need for all IDBs to hold their own badger licences (although they may wish to do so anyway) and makes it much easier for MLC to continue to provide qualified and licenced supervision of works where necessary. Any work that carries any risk of damaging a badger sett or disturbing a badger within a sett, even if the risk is deemed to be small, is still licensable and MLC should be contacted for further advice where such works are planned. This includes desilting over or near to a badger sett. Where there is uncertainty, if any works are planned within 30m of a badger sett, please contact MLC for advice and guidance. Please see the updated CL27 licence on-line for full details of activities that are likely to be licensable: Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes (CL27) - GOV.UK

4) Improved advice and guidance provision:

a) We have developed some extended pre-application advice and guidance for consent applicants to help them understand what environmental considerations they need to make before submitting an application to us. This includes helping them to secure the correct ecological advice and what ecological assessments they need to submit with their application. This will help applicants to avoid delays in us processing their application until such information is received. It has already reduced the number of queries and frequently asked questions that we have had to respond to. It also helps to ensure more efficient delivery of the IDBs statutory responsibilities regarding the environment that are associated with consenting the work of others in and around IDB channels. Please take a look on the website for more information.

b) We have welcomed new ecological resource at MLC who will be assisting with delivering the new service package to IDBs. **Abigail Leach** has a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience that she has brought with her, most recently from working at the Broads Authority, and is very well regarded in the industry. Abigail has already revised and updated the **biosecurity policy** and will be launching it later this year at the next IDB training event.

5) Water Vole Displacement Myth Busting

A number of recent, licenced IDB water vole displacements have taken place throughout the MLC area, which have enabled some of the DEFRA-funded improvement works to be completed. There appears to be some mis-information circulating amongst some IDBs around the need for and cost of water vole displacements which is causing some concern and confusion. To help all stakeholders to be better informed, we have produced a myth-busting document, attached as an Appendix to the Board report. We will also circulate a pamphlet summarising what activity, presence and timescales landowners and farmers can expect when a water vole displacement is taking place on their land along with the notice of entry for all future displacements to help to set expectations correctly. Please contact us should you have any further questions.

Author Name: Sofi Lloyd Role: Ecology and Environmental Services Manager

Water Voles - Myth Busting

1.	**Claim** - ***Water vole displacements cost a lot of money!*** **Fact -** Water vole displacements do add some additional costs to bank works but if MLC services are used, this is much less than some may think. It is most certainly an incalculable amount less than legal, financial and reputational costs if criminal proceedings were progressed in relation to a water vole offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.	
	Approx. cost of bank repair per 150m (no water voles):	
	£4,680 – 5,140	**£31-34** *per metre*
	Additional cost of MLC-progressed water vole displacement per 150m	
	£2,110 - £2,260	**£14-15** *per metre*
	Cost of using external consultants for displacement per 150m	
	£4,810 - £9,810	**£32-65** *per metre*
2.	**Claim** ***– Other IDBs and RMAs and farmers etc. just get on with bank work without surveying for or displacing water voles and they aren't getting into trouble.*** **Fact –** Other IDBs and RMAs do displace water voles under licence before bank works as our ecologists have worked with them to do so. Where bank works take place without water vole	

	displacements, it is likely that no water vole have been found in the works area to displace. There are also an increasing number of investigations and prosecutions where water vole offences have been committed in areas of bank works.
3.	**Claim** – ***If you are undertaking flood risk management work, you are exempt from needing to displace water voles as you are keeping land and property safe from flooding.*** **Fact –** Protected species legislation is law an no-one is exempt so routine and regular bank works must be undertaken compliantly. Urgent has a different legal meaning to emergency. Urgent works are those that require prompt action to resolve an expected but not imminent threat to public health and safety such as a bank slip. It is not likely that a repairing a bank slip after harvest to avoid damaging crops, that had originally occurred months previously will be seen legally as either an emergency or urgent works because sufficient time would have passed to allow for the works to be planned compliantly with a displacement if necessary. An emergency would be where an unexpected event requires immediate works to prevent or alleviate a significant threat to public health and safety, such as the sudden collapse of a bank and flood water threatening surrounding residential or developed areas. In an emergency it may be necessary to fix the problem first but be confident that you can provide evidence of threat to public health and safety to the Regulator as soon as possible after the works, as is legally required. The emergency declaration must always be made in partnership with a range of professionals including an ecologist.
4.	**Claim** – ***You can't do any bank works or maintenance where there are water voles anymore.*** **Fact –** There are safe standard operating procedures that allow routine work such as desilting and flail mowing to be undertaken compliantly where there are water voles which help to avoid or minimise the risk of committing an offence. Any invasive work that breaks ground on the bank toe or bank face should be informed by a water vole survey, undertaken in the right season, well before works begin. For small areas of impact, for example a field drain or headwall installation, of a metre or so wide, it may be possible to reposition the works away from burrows under ecological supervision so a licenced displacement is not required. For longer lengths of bank impacts such as culvert installation or bank reprofile or repair, if a survey showed that water vole were present a displacement under licence would be required.
5.	**Claim** - ***You can get rid of water voles to avoid the need for a displacement if you flail all the banks and marginal vegetation before a survey or dewater a channel.*** **Fact –** Dewatering a channel where water voles were known to be present is a licensable activity could be classed as an offence if it were not for specific and very short-term purposes or where a survey had not taken place to determine their presence or absence. Cutting bankside vegetation alone would be unlikely to displace water voles but could be classed as an offence if it damaged burrows or disturbed water voles in their burrows.
6.	**Claim –** ***If you fix a bank slip straight away it is unlikely to require a water vole displacement.*** **Fact –** A survey would still be needed but it is likely that water vole burrows would have been destroyed or damaged during the slip in many cases and they may have therefore left the damaged areas. If the survey proved this to be the case, then the slip could be repaired as usual without the need for a licenced displacement.
7.	**Claim** – ***Water voles are still in our ditches and we have done bank works before without displacing them so it can't bother them that much.*** **Fact –** Regardless of this, damaging water vole burrows or disturbing them in their burrows is unlawful and carries a custodial sentence and/or a fine if found guilty. The law is based on huge

	volumes of scientific evidence which demonstrates that habitat damage and loss is a key factor in the drastic decline in water vole populations. The displacement approaches are shown to conserve and enhance water vole populations.
8.	**Claim -** ***You can only repair one 150m length of bank where there are water voles.*** **Fact -** The IDB water vole licence states that you can only legally displace from 150m at a time when you are displacing from both banks. You have to leave a 150m bank length for refuge in-between repaired sections. If only one bank is being repaired, theoretically you could displace from an unlimited length but only if an ecologist calculated that the opposite and adjacent habitat was suitable to take an increased number of water vole from the impacted area, which in most cases is unlikely. The usual maximum licensable displacement length for IDBs in all cases is 150m.
9.	**Claim** ***– You can only displace water voles during a few specific weeks of the year.*** **Fact –** This is true as licenced displacements during these weeks are shown to impact the water vole population the least and it avoids their dormant and breeding seasons. Displacement licence periods are from 15th Feb-15th April or 15th Sept to 31st Oct. You can also only survey for water voles between 15th Feb to 31st Oct as they are dormant during winter.
10.	**Claim** ***– It is best not to tell anyone that you have water voles as they can stop you doing the work that you want to do, and don't allow surveys*** **Fact –** It is assumed that water voles are everywhere in IDB ditches and drains so a survey would always be required ahead of any invasive works. Demonstrating transparency and competence in supporting biodiversity is likely to be attractive to potential funding partners and sources whereas having a lack of biodiversity data and evidence or being evasive can be conspicuous and can attract scrutiny.
NOTE! Water Vole displacement are only needed where there are water voles! If a survey shows they are not, then bank works can go ahead.	

Mr M Jackson and Mr E Jackson arrived during the Environment Officers' report.

The Chair advised the Board that he had invited Ms Lloyd to the meeting so that the Board could all meet her, but also for Ms Lloyd to present to the Board on the importance of Biodiversity Nett Gain, and how the Board should be carrying out works in a compliant way. He added that as Mr Robinson carries out a significant proportion of the Boards works that it was important for him to attend this part of the meeting, but also as Mr Robinson had been working with Ms Lloyd on the Boards Biodiversity Action Plan, he would be available to answer any questions.

Ms Lloyd began by explaining that she saw the Boards role as Environmental Risk Management, rather than Conservation. She added that where there are laws in place, these can be broken, and she sees her role as helping Boards to find ways to mitigate these risks. These laws are actively enforced and IDBs are being investigated and prosecuted.

Her presentation included details of the non-routine works process, and explaining how works can be timed without impacting protected species. Ms Lloyd explained the process of developing a Biodiversity Action Plan, and also explained what would be included in the new works package being introduced. She explained that funding could be available for works that show an environmental benefit but to be eligible for this funding applicants would need to be able to demonstrate environmental competence. Ms Lloyd gave guidance on working near badgers and water voles, and on suitable methods of flail mowing and other regular operations.

She stressed the importance of record keeping, and reminded the Board that she and Abigail Leach are available to support the Board if they are unsure of anything.

The Chair thanked Ms Lloyd for her presentation, and the Board agreed that it had been useful and informative.
The Chair then suggested that the Board consider changing their policy on verge cutting, changing to alternate sides each year. The Board agreed to this, although Mr R Lee was concerned that this approach may impact flow and so this would need to be monitored.

Ms Lloyd then left the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Officer's Report be approved.

That the Board's policy on verge cutting changes to alternate sides each year.

District Officers Report

The Chair asked the Board to divert from the published agenda and move to the District Officers Report. The report was given verbally by the Chair, who explained that as the District Officer had only recently taken the role, there was no written report but he advised that a written report would be presented at the next meeting. He said that Mr Robinson is finding his feet and making the role his own. He added that there is nothing further to report, although Mr Robinson said he would like to purchase a new lawn mower.

There were no questions for Mr Robinson, and he left the meeting.

B.2392 Consulting Engineers' Reports
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**7**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Nicola Oldfield**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. **Support proposed approach to delivering catchment study work.**
B. **Consider the development of a capital investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.**
C. **Review pumping station key dates and inform the Consulting Engineer of any discrepancies or additional information.**

1. Specific Issues

Cranbrook/Counter Drain (CCD) Flood Risk Management (FRM) Strategy

The previous request for outcomes associated with the Strategy, Lidar, ground water, topographical survey, hydraulic modelling etc have not yet been received.

The Environment Agency has requested that the grant in aid allocated to the Board for progression of a system study be reallocated to the CCD Strategy to effectively fund the same work but as part of the strategy delivery, avoiding duplication of effort. Work includes channel surveys, hydraulic modelling and an asset inspection of Mepal Pumping Station. The Consulting Engineer has agreed to this providing that the data collected and any models etc created are provide to the Board for future use in developing catchment improvements, and that the Engineer and Board representatives are included in the scoping and sign-off of the project.

The Board is asked to support this approach.

1.2 **Developments within the Masterplan area**

Witcham Meadlands Quarry, Block Fen Drove, Mepal – Mick George (Haulage) Ltd (MLC Ref No 156); Mick George Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 207, 211, 213, 286, 289, 303 & 395); Langwood Fen (Cambridgeshire Aggregates Ltd) (MLC Ref No 316)

Cambridgeshire County Council's Minerals & Waste division are consulting with MLC on this site. They've asked us for our views on a phase revision aggregate extraction plan, requirements and locations for water level monitoring boreholes, and any concerns over groundwater fluctuations on site and across the wider catchment area. A Teams meeting with CCC was held on 3rd April to discuss the site more thoroughly.

Developments at Hundreds (Coopers) Farm, Langwood Fen Drove, Chatteris – A Sole & Son (MLC Ref No 091), Mick George Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 9A & 218), Mr P Sole (MLC Ref No 319) & A Sole & Sons Ltd (MLC Ref No 354 & 369)

On 16th January, an on-site meeting was held with MLC's Planning Officer, MGL's Head of Waste Permitting and Compliance, their Land & Estates Manager, and Philip Sole (landowner) to discuss revising MLC's stance on consenting concrete headwalls for the proposed culvert and removing the requirement for groundwater monitoring.

Subject to planning approval for expanding the existing quarry site eastwards, the proposed culvert is in an IDB drain between nodes 5 and 14 and will be under a to be constructed haul road and just require as raised ballast (ARB) cover and to form headwalls, as the constant running and vibration of laden dump-trucks will cause solid headwalls to creep and collapse. It is also an industry wide recognised standard.

Additionally, as there will be an Environment Agency requirement for water level monitoring boreholes in any pending planning approval, these will no longer be a necessity for the Board.

Similarly, demands for emission limits monitoring for suspended solids and pH are excessive demands which ordinarily would be monitored intermittently by the Environment Agency. However, MLC have insisted that for the perpetuity of the sites use, any rose head on the end of the dewatering abstraction pump - normally 6" - hose be lifted at least 1m off the quarry bed by having buoyancy aids roped to the rose head. This should eliminate inherent problems encountered on all MGL's current operation sites in Middle Levels catchment, whereby the rose head is left lying on the quarry bed and when used, discharges excess silt and fine sand which smothers the bed of adjacent watercourses. This requires additional mechanised maintenance by District Officers and is extremely detrimental to biodiversity in drains. Under the Quarry Regulations Act 1999, it is forbidden for any quarry operator to discharge excess fines (silt and sand) into watercourses. MLC are currently pursuing rolling out the 'good practice measure' of elevating rose heads on all MGL's sites and obtain their weekly discharge pump hour readings. This is another legal obligation under the QRA 1999 which is instead currently undertaken by Board Chairman and/or District Officers in their own time. All being well, this should not be the case going forward.

The Boards thoughts on both the Witcham Meadlands and Coopers Farm sites, above, would be appreciated.

1.3 **Other Developments**

Mixed Use Development on land at Tithe Barn Farm and south east of London Road, Chatteris – Hallam Land Management Ltd (MLC Ref Nos. 160, 184, 606 & 630) & Barratt Homes Northampton (MLC Ref. No. 397).

It is hoped that a meeting with Barratt Redrow plc to discuss the issues associated with this large development will be held in the next few months.

Unresolved historic culverting and land drainage issue near Colnefields at land south of Chatteris Road, Somersham.

The Boards Chairman and Planning Officer are proactively investigating previously consented works issued in 2022 which appear not to have been implemented as per the consent. This may or may not have aggravated localised drainage to a neighbouring landowner, hence investigation is still ongoing.

2. Strategic Issues

The Consulting Engineer has responded on the Board's behalf concerning the following:

2.1 **Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC)**

Further, more proactive, discussions have occurred with HDC's Planning Policy Team and its consultants concerning the Call for Sites; the SFRA Level 2 Update with a consultation on the Infrastructure Delivery Study – Baseline Assessment anticipated imminently.

An Infrastructure Development Strategy is a comprehensive plan aimed at enhancing a region's physical systems, such as transportation, utilities, and communication networks, to promote economic growth and improve living conditions. This strategy often includes investment in roads, bridges, public transit, and other essential facilities to support urban development and sustainability. By addressing infrastructure needs, cities can better accommodate population growth, attract businesses, and improve overall quality of life.

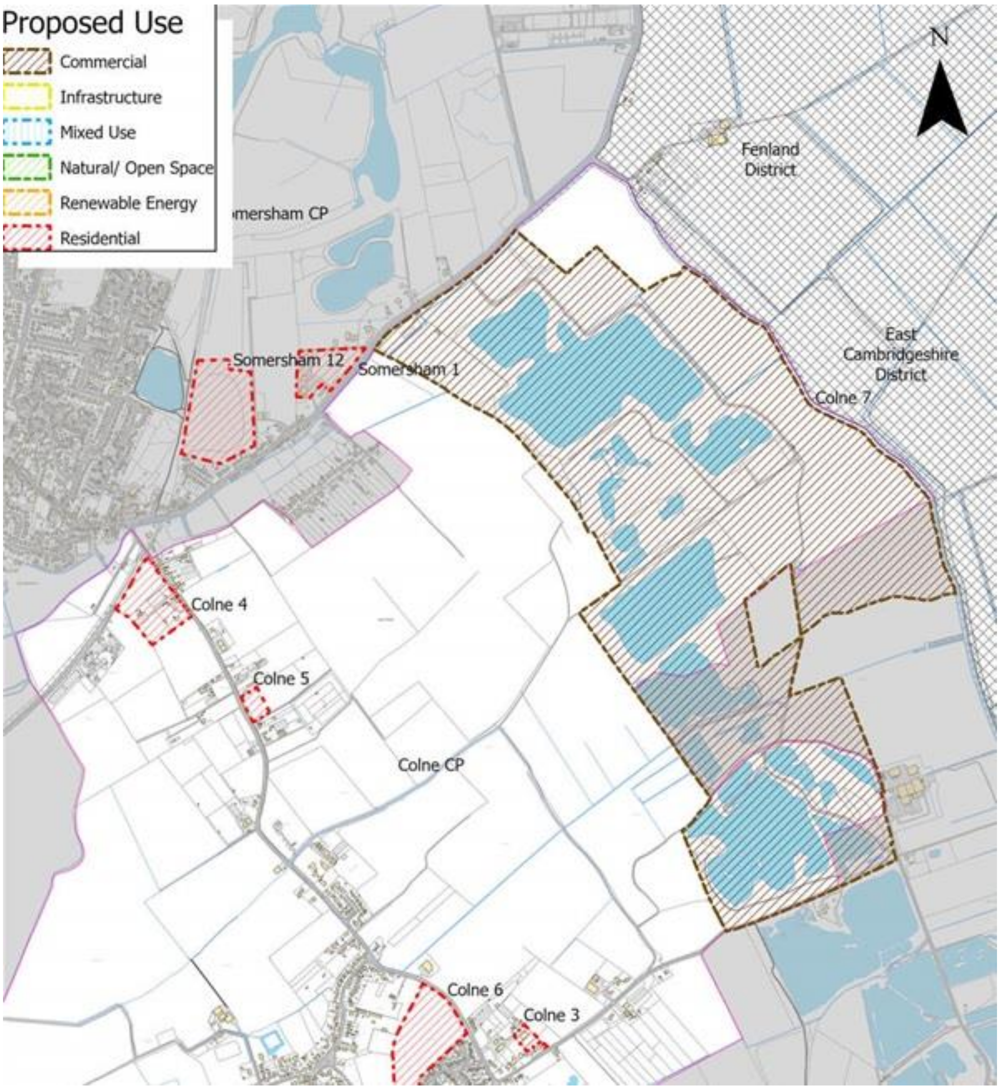
Themes relevant to the Board's interests are Leisure and Community Facilities; Green & Blue Infrastructure and Flood Management.

2.2 **Call for Sites**

The Call for Sites which ran from 29 March to 7 June 2023 was an opportunity for people to send the Council details of sites that might be suitable for allocation in the next Local Plan. One site put forward was a large potential commercial development at Colne Fen Farm and Fishery, south of Chatteris Road, Somersham (Colne) the location of which is shown on the attached extract. Identified as Colne 7 the site is within the Boards district. A Sustainability Assessment of the site has been made and advises that:

"The site is detached from a settlement and relates much more closely to the open countryside than either Somersham or Colne. It is remote from public or active travel. It consists of a former gravel extraction and quarrying works which has been undergoing conservation and restoration for several years with works to complete in 5 years. The site is also used for fishing. The site promoter's longer term ambition for the site is to provide some additional commercial leisure uses consisting of holiday lodges, associated water related leisure uses and biodiversity net gain. The impact of

intensifying the leisure uses on site would need detailed assessment particularly in terms of its potential impact on the Earith Gravel Pits CWS and the Ouse Washes Ramsar/SPA/SAC."



2.3 **Fenland District Council (FDC) Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Consultation**

This high level document is currently the subject of a consultation.

It is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of their Local Plan. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is an iterative process which forms an integral to the plan making process and is used to appraise the social, environmental, and economic effects of the Local Plan.

It should provide a sound evidence base for the plan, form an integrated part of the plan preparation process and will help ensure that decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The SA Scoping Report is the first stage in the SA process. Through an assessment of the current situation in Fenland, the SA Scoping Report identifies which issues need to be addressed and identifies objectives to test the Plan and policies against. This assessment will help to establish the Issues, Vision and Objectives of the emerging Local Plan.
The document is primarily aimed at Historic England, Natural England and The Environment Agency but comments are welcome from any organisation or individual.

At the time of writing the document is being considered with the intention of issuing a response by the deadline.

2.4 Cambridgeshire County Council

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood and Water (C&P FloW) Partnership

In addition to the items discussed above, the following issues of interest to the Board have been raised:

a. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

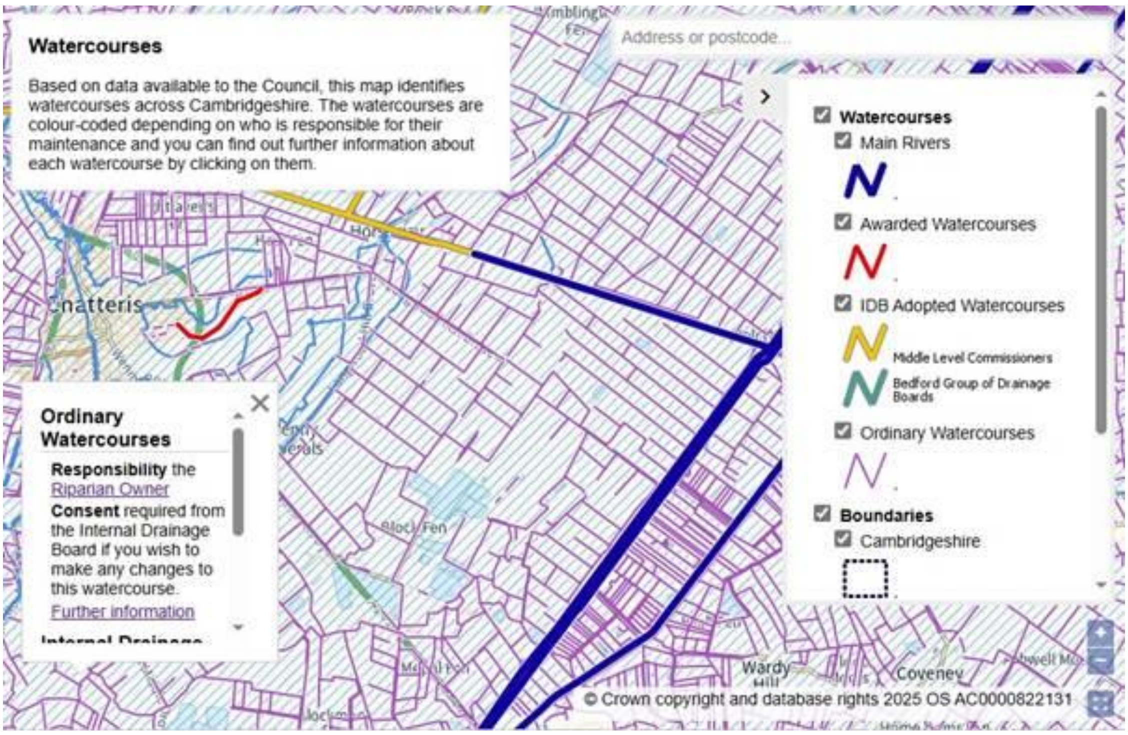
Given that a year has passed since the workshop and no meaningful correspondence or outcomes appear to have been received, the Commissioners requested an update on this programme. However, it is understood that these sites are included in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy: 2024 Action Plan Review. See below.

b. Community Flood Action programme

Further copies of the Community Flood and Water newsletter have been issued. You can view previous editions and subscribe to receive the newsletter automatically at [Community flood action programme | Cambridgeshire County Council].

c. Watercourse Mapping Tool

The Flood Risk team has published a Watercourse Mapping Tool - [Watercourse management | Cambridgeshire County Council] that can be used to identify location of, and responsibility for different, watercourses.



Extract from the CCC Watercourse Mapping Tool showing part of the Boards area

Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy (FRMS): 2024 Action Plan Review

A plan review has been prepared to provide an update on the progress of actions listed in the Cambridgeshire FRMS, which was adopted in 2022, highlighting contributions, completed work and any risks or challenges.

The contents are currently being reviewed in detail, but it summarises that:

> *"Progress has already been made against 54 of the 58 actions with 6 actions now having been completed. There are several obstacles that impede progress in some areas, these are outlined below. Despite that and the persisting wet weather conditions, headway has been made across most actions and by multiple partners.*
>
> *The importance of clear communication remains in focus, whilst the impactful action led by community groups and local landowners continues to provide positive results.*
>
> *There is still some uncertainty from external factors that influence the work we do. In response to this we take an adaptive approach so we can be prepared for the changing circumstances."*

2.5 **Cambridge Water**

Drought Management Plan (DMP)

Cambridge Water are commencing the review and development of its new DMP, prior to submission to Defra following a period of formal public consultation and has sought the views of several stakeholders for consideration on the development of a new plan and approach to drought management. In general, the Plan does not directly affect the Board but a response was made which amongst other items referred to Drought Triggers, Temporary Use Bans, Bulk Transfers and Communications with customers.

3. **IDB Recovery Fund T2B**

Funding allocations for Tranche 2 were confirmed in mid-November and work has now been completed including repairs to weed screens, pumps and controls and channel repairs.

Works were included in a second bid for Tranche 2B to be delivered be March 2026, but the bid was unsuccessful.

The criteria for bids were for the modernisation, innovation, and upgrade of IDB assets and waterways, making them more effective, sustainable, environmentally friendly for agricultural land, flood risk and rural communities.

4. **Capital Programme**

4.1 Refer to section 2.1.

4.2 It is recommended that the Board considers the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement. Pumping station replacement costs are included on the capital programme. Further investment will be needed in the interim and will be developed further in line with the Key Health Indicators.

The Board is asked to consider the development of a capital investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

4.3 The Board's Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 1.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield
Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Improvement Programme 2025/26
Appendix 2: List of applications responded to since last report
Appendix 3: M&E Report

Appendix 1

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Capital Improvement Programme (2025/2026)

		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
Mepal p/s	Pumping station replacement	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	51,000.0	0.0	0.0	51000.0
	Pumping station pumping and control equipment replacement	36.5	0	0.0	77.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	113.5
	Pumping station automatic weedscreen cleaning equipment	0	0	0.0	50.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	55.0
	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	5.0	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
Plant & Vehicles	Toyota Hilux Pick up	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0
	Case Tractor	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Spearhead Twiga flail mower	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.0
	Conver Weedcutting Boat C480F	0	0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0
	Atlas 140w wheeled excavator	0	130	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	130.0
	Piling hammer	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0
Drainage Channels	Cranbrook inprovement scheme	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		36.5	**130**	**0**	**177**	**15**	**50**	**0**	**0**	**100**	**51,000**	**0**	**5**	**51,514**

Plant & Vehicles.
Replacement strategy
Last reviewed June 2022 - approved

Asset	Purchased	Replaceme	Est. cost
Toyota Hilux Pick up	2015/2016	10 years	15
Case Tractor	2019/20	10 years	100
Spearhead Twiga flail mower	2016/2017	10 years	32
Conver Weedcutting Boat C480F		9 Years	50
Atlas 140w wheeled excavator	2011/12	10 years	130
Piling hammer (new purchase)	2016/2017	10 years	10

Appendix 2

The following planning applications have been responded to since the last meeting:

MLC Ref.	*Council Ref.*	*Applicant*	*Type of Development*	*Location*
397	F/YR24/0952/RM	Barratt Homes Northampton	Residential (245 dwellings)	London Road, Chatteris
398	F/YR24/0984/F	Mr & Mrs S Scales	Residence (Extension)	London Road, Chatteris
399	F/YR25/0076/F	Mr & Mrs J Bibby	Change of use (Agricultural to Equestrian)	Stocking Drove Chatteris
400	E/25/00176/VAR3M	East Cambs DC	Commercial (Crematorium)	Chatteris Road, Mepal

There have been no planning, Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) or (to discharge to a watercourse), or infiltration device applications processed since the last meeting.

Appendix 3

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:		7
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)**	**Subject:**	**CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL**	
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**		**Dave Bantoft**

1. M&E key messages and advice

1.1 Other than the matters described below or previously reported, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at the station is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition. The station and control panels are at an age where reliability is starting to become a concern.

In light of uncertainty of GiA funding 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.

1.2 **Pumps**

These are the pumps currently fitted:

Pump 1 - Previously overhauled spare unit fitted.
- Overhauled 2014 fitted July 2022 and showing signs of failure.

Pump 2 - New unit fitted October 2023
Pump 3 - New unit fitted October 2019

The new pump has been delivered to MLC.
The pump removed from pump 2 canister was working when removed on the 27th September 2023 but it had poor insulation resistance which is a sign of water ingress into the motor. It is one of the original pumps and has been overhauled in the past. Overhauling this unit again is not recommended as due to its age it is unlikely to be viable or reliable. This pump cannot be considered a reliable spare.

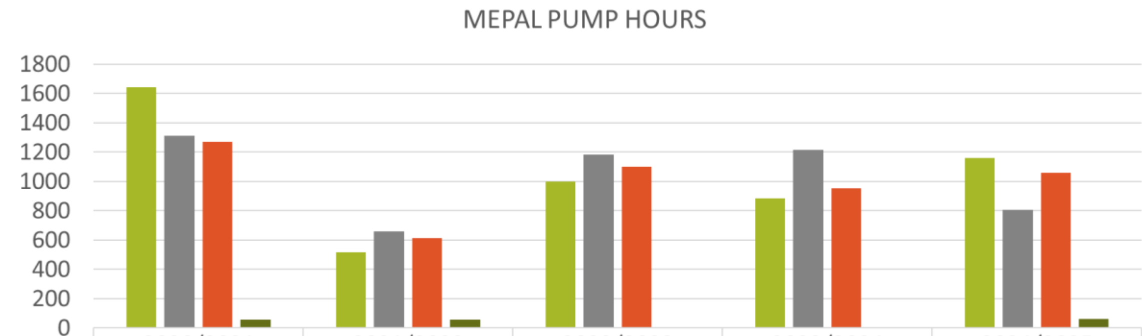
The pump control panel is now 35 years old, and replacement should be considered to ensure continuing reliability. Replacement of this control panel is likely to cost in the region of £40k to £70k. It may be viable to overhaul the current panels with modern components.

The ultrasonic level controller would benefit from replacement due to its age; a program glitch last winter caused a fault that would only allow 2 pumps to run.
This is a good opportunity to replace the level controller and integrate it with telemetry., which is likely to cost in the region of £5k to £7k.

The weed screen cleaner is also now 35 years old. It was overhauled in 2014 including a refurbished control panel. This unit is a one off which makes spare parts more difficult to source which leads to longer downtime. The unit should be considered for replacement, which would cost in the region of £50k.

2. Pumping summary

Please note hours are shown for the electric pumps only, it does not include the volumes pumped by the engine.



	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
PUMP 1	1644	517	997	882	1160
PUMP 2	1310	659	1185	1214	806
PUMP 3	1271	611	1102	955	1057
PUMP 4	55	55	8	1	63

3. Inspections

3.1 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out during November 2024

3.2 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Report (due every 5 years) was successfully completed in August 2024.

Board	Station	EICR Date	EICR Due
Sutton & Mepal	Mepal	30-Aug-2024	30-Aug-2029

4. Pumping Station Key Dates

4.1 **Please review the pumping station key dates below, if there are any discrepancies or you can add any details, please let me know. The key dates are an important reference and will feed into the upcoming Key Health Indicators and District Studies.**

	Station				Weedscreen		
Station	**Built**	**Pump Canisters**	**Pump Overhaul**	**Controls**	**WSC**	**WSC O/H**	**Controls**
Mepal	1929/ 1990	1990	Pump 1: 2014 (fitted 2022), Pump 2: new 2023, Pump 3: new 2019	1990	1990	2014	1990

Author Name: Dave Bantoft
Role: M&E Engineer

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

Cranbrook/Counter Drain Flood Risk Management Strategy

Mrs Martin referred to the Report, where the Board is asked to support the reallocation of the GiA funding to CCD Strategy. The Chief Engineer has asked for the Board to support this provided that the Engineer and a Board representative are included in scoping and sign off of the project.

The Chair explained the background of the strategy and the Board agreed to the modelling. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would be the points of contact representing the Board. The Chair has been involved to date, but the future of the pumping station, how water is moved through the district, and any future amalgamations all depend on the outcome of the report.

Planning and Consent Applications

The Chair advised that he continues to deal with small items but will bring items that require further guidance to the Board. He explained to the Board a situation that has arisen where the Board previously gave a landowner permission to infill a dyke on his land and part of a drain. It was agreed that he would fit perorated pipe in his own drain with a pipe to his lake, using this as a conveyor of water. Since this was installed the neighbouring land has changed hands. His consent allowed for their connection to his drain, and the Chair further explained the previous consents circumstances to the Board. The neighbouring landowner seems to be developing the land potentially without planning permission, and the landowner has raised a concern about effluent from the tank reaching his lake which has been stocked with fish. He now wishes to remove the pipe to the lake and install a new pipe, and also not to fill in the last section of drain. Some discussion ensued regarding the land, with Mr Chiswell advising the Huntingdonshire District Council has been involved with the site. He thought that in the circumstances the landowner's approach was pragmatic, and Mr R Lee agreed, adding that HDCs response gave him some confidence. The Chair advised that this is not a Board drain, and that he would like to see it removed from the Boards district and to sit with the EA. Many of the Board members agreed that the land has historically flooded. The Chair was grateful for the feedback from the Board.

The Chair advised that a consent application has also been received from UK Power Networks who want to place a cable 2m from a Board drain, near Block Fen. He asked for the Boards thoughts on this proposal. Mr R Lee thought that as the Byelaws state 9m this would be difficult to accept, and that any consent should include a clause making the applicant responsible for the cost of moving the cable should the Board need to widen the drain. The Chair advised that the proposal is to place the cable as close to the building as possible with a caveat in the deeds that the landowner would be responsible for moving the cable at the landowner's costs in the future. This was agreed by the Board and Mrs Martin was asked to report this back to the Planning Officer.

Mr Heading commented that there is lots going on with the Tithe Farm development in Chatteris, but there have been no updates. The Chair advised that the Board's Sub Committee was not happy with the original proposals, and that they had received an email last week advising that a meeting is being arranged. Mr Heading thought that with all of the development planned for the area it is important that the Board are engaged.

Capital Programme

Mrs Martin asked the Board to review the Capital Programme as included in the agenda, bearing in mind that current indications are that there will be no funding allocation within the current spending review period. The Chair reminded the Board that they are raising £25k each year for their Capital Works fund. Referring to the Capital Programme, he suggested that the replacement boat could be pushed back a few years provided that the current maintenance regime is continued. It was agreed that the planned boat replacement could be pushed back for two years. The control equipment replacement at the pumping station which had been programmed for 2025/26 could be moved back 12 or 24 months. The Board agreed that there would be no point investing in new controls if a new pumping station is being planned. The Board agreed to carry out repairs when needed but did not feel the need to replace equipment just to keep it up to date. It was also agreed to move the planned weed screen equipment works back 12 months.

RESOLVED

That the Board supports the approach to the Cranbrook/Counter Drain Flood Risk Management Strategy and that the Chair and Vice Chair are to be the Boards representatives in scoping and sign off.

That the Boards comments regarding Mr Newmans consent application are fed back through the Planning Officer.

That the Capital Programme is amended as agreed.

Mechanical and Electrical Report

Mrs Martin referred to the report and the Board reviewed its content. It was noted that the equipment is ageing and that failures must be expected, but they now effectively have 3 new pumps. The Board acknowledged that the old pump that was last replaced has been retained as an emergency spare, but that this pump may not be reliable. However the diesel pumps can move the same volume of water and can be considered an emergency back up. The Board agreed that they were comfortable with this situation, and that they were happy to keep the original pump as the spare.

Mr Heading advised the Board that the Middle Level Commissioners have purchasing a number of mobile pumps as part of the Tranche 2 funding and so they would be better resourced for emergency situations.

RESOLVED

That the report be approved but no works agreed.

B.2393 Health & Safety
Viz:

Cope
SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Site Safety Inspection Record

Middle Level - Sutton and Mepal IDB
280225

Complete

Name of organisation:	Middle Level Commissioners - Sutton and Mepal
Date of site visit	28.02.2025 13:33 GMT
Address of inspected premises	Mepal Pumping Station Engine Bank Mepal CB6 2AX
Name of Advisor	Kathryn Simmonds
Time of arrival at site:	28.02.2025 13:33 GMT
Audit Name	Middle Level - Sutton and Mepal IDB 280225

Audit

An opening meeting was held with

Christopher Lee

Have there been any new starters since our last visit?	Yes

There has been one new starter since the last visit who is based at the pumping station. Induction training has been completed.

1

Training for new staff was discussed. It is understood that they hold their PA1 and 2 tickets and their PA6 is still required. It was good to note that you have compiled a list of additional training that may be required, such as manual handling, first aid, abrasive wheels, etc. Please ensure that any other training that may be required is undertaken and refreshed periodically.

It should also be ensured that any relevant risk assessments, safe systems of work, etc. are communicated to staff, with signatures obtained to confirm understanding.

2

One overhead crane was noted to have been subject to inspection by a competent person under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) 1998 in November 24. An additional overhead crane was noted to be installed in the pump house, however is not in use and the chains have been secured with a padlock to prevent use. Should the secondary crane be required, ensure that a LOLER inspection is completed beforehand.

3

It was observed that some maintenance work has been undertaken on equipment and belts and pulleys are in the process of being replaced. Please ensure that any guarding that has been removed for these works is replaced before the equipment is back in use. It was verbally confirmed that this will not be used until repairs have been completed.

Photo 1

4

Firefighting equipment was noted to have been subject to inspection in May 2024. Please ensure that these are visually checked regularly for defects, low pressure, etc. Should any issues be identified, these should be reported. A CO2 extinguisher was also provided for the electrical shed, also inspected May 2024 according to the label on the equipment.

5

It was confirmed that the bungalow next to the pumping station is now leased to a private tenant, and you plan to instal fencing across the perimeter to prevent unauthorised access. This will required a new access to be provided for staff to get to the screen cleaners, etc. Please ensure that competent persons are appointed to carry out the works, and relevant risk assessments, etc. are obtained.

The rest of the site was found to be provided with palisade fencing and appeared to be secure. You confirmed that all doors and windows are also locked at the end of the working day.

6

Lighting was noted to be provided both within the pump house and in external areas, however you confirmed that this is due to be upgraded. It should be ensured that adequate lighting is provided to prevent persons from tripping and falling in times of darkness.

Additional lighting was found to be provided near the automatic screed cleaner, however it could not be confirmed if this provides a sufficient level of lighting. Consideration should be given to install additional light in this area also.

7

External areas were found to be provided with handrails where there is a change of level in the ground surface, e.g. steps. Slip resistant materials have also been provided for areas that could become slippery.

8

It was good to note that CCTV is planned to be installed to monitor the site. This will also be utilised to manage lone working. It was verbally confirmed that you are notified when staff arrive and leave the site through text messages or phone calls. Please ensure that this is continued for early notification of any issues that may arise.

9

It was noted that some signage is displayed on site, such as automatic machinery warnings near the screed cleaner and electrical warnings at the electrical shed. However it did not appear that any other signage was displayed. It is recommended that one large sign is displayed at the entrance to the site which provides all information relevant, such as:
-Name of pumping station
-Location ID (or What3Words)
-Emergency contact number
-Warning signage for hazards present.

Photographic Risk Assessment

Advisor's signature

Kathryn Simmonds
28.02.2025 14:19 GMT

Departure time	28.02.2025 14:19 GMT
Number of outstanding Photographic Risk Assessments	0 From 0 to 99

Media summary

Photo 1

The Vice Chair reported that the Health and Safety visit was carried out in February, and he and the District Officer attended. The visit identified that the District Officer will require training on operating the weed boat, and the Vice Chair has been looking to source suitable training. He confirmed that the District Officer has had training in Abrasive Wheels and Working at Height and Ladder Training have been arranged. The Chair is organising training on the 360 machine.

There is an oil leak on the suction side of the diesel pumps, as reported at the Pumping Station Inspection, and following lighting being identified during the visit as a risk, new LED lighting has been installed. It was suggested that further signage is needed at the Pumping Station but Cope have suggested to the Middle Level Commissioners that all Boards could have this installed together. The Chair suggested that this is something that could be reported at the Chair's Meeting later in the year, suggesting that signage could be standardised.

The Vice Chair reported that other than the minor issues identified, all was compliant. Mr Heading suggested that the Middle Level be asked if they can assist with the weed boat training, and Mrs Martin agreed to ask the Middle Level's Operations Manager (Health and Safety) to contact the Chair.

B.2394 Governance

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	10
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**GOVERNANCE**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider and approve the Internal Audit Return for 2024/2025
B. Consider and approve the Auditors Report for 2024/2025
C. Note the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.
D. Review and approve the updated Policy Statement included as appendix.
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. Note the system of financial Internal Controls that are in place and consider whether additional controls are required within the running and decision making of the Board.
G. To review and approve the publishing of Exercise of Public Rights
H. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments
I. To note and approve the submission of the IDB1 return made on its behalf to Defra.
J. To review and approve the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2025 and authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement.

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 The Board to consider:

- the comments of the auditors on the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2025. (Appendix 1)
- the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year ended 31st March 2025. (Appendix 2)

1.3 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).

1.4 The Board is asked to act on the advice of the Auditor within its decision making.

2. Risk Assessment and Insured Values

2.1 The insured values for the Board's assets are detailed below:

SUTTON & MEPAL IDB
INSURED VALUE OF FIXED ASSETS

PUMPING STATIONS AND BUNGALOW

		As At 1st April 2025	
Fortrey Hall Pumping Station	Electric	2,500,000.00	
Fortrey Hall Pumping Station	Diesel	2,500,000.00	
		5,000,000.00	Index linked
Mepal Pumping Station Bungalow		263,500.00	Index linked
		5,263,500.00	

3. Policy Statement Reviews

We have an ongoing review and update of policies. Within this we are also improving our management of Freedom of Information requests.

The Board are asked to review and approve the Board's Policy Statement. (Appendix 3)

4. IDB1

4.1 To note and support the IDB1 return submitted on their behalf for the year 2023/24 is included as Appendix 4.

5. Annual Governance Statement:

5.1 To review and approve the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement. (Appendix 5)

6. Exercise of Public Rights

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

7. Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments:

7.1 The clerk to report.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role: Clerk

Appendix 1	**Annual Return 2024/2025**
Appendix 2	**Audit Report 2024/2025**
Appendix 3	**Policy Statement**
Appendix 4	**IDB1 2023/24**
Appendix 5	**Annual Governance Statement 2025**

Appendix 1

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024

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 Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board for the year ended 31st March 2024 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 Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

The Clerk
Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board
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 Board

Date of Announcement: 23rd August 2024

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, 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 2023/24 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 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 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 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 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 2022/23 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

	Yes	No	Not applicable
O. **(For local councils only)** 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: 29/05/2024 04/06/2024 12/06/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: WHITINGS LLP

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: [signature] – WHITINGS LLP

Date: 12/06/2024

***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 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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 2024, that:

	Agreed Yes	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:

23/05/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

G.2368

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

Chair

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	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	682,359	669,071	*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	271,218	289,475	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	12,863	85,945	*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	37,190	59,100	*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	260,179	589,365	*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	669,071	396,026	*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	683,227	547,800	*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	3,202,164	3,269,164	*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			*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 2024 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 26/04/2024

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

23/05/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

C.2369

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

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage board – DB0105**

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 2024; 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 2023/24

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 2023/24

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 2024.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature: PKF Littlejohn LLP   Date: 16/08/2024

Appendix 2

Whitings
Chartered Accountants LLP
Fenland House, 158 Hostmoor Avenue
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AX
t: 01354 652304
e: march@whitingsllp.co.uk
w: whitingsllp.co.uk

BB/MM053
30 June 2024

Messrs. P Burrows, R Hill and S Ablett
Middle Level Offices
85 Whittlesey Road
March
Cambs.
PE15 0AH

Dear Messrs. P Burrows, R. Hill, and S Ablett,

MLC administered Internal Drainage Boards - Internal Audit 2023-2024

Having completed the internal audit work for the various Internal Drainage Boards administered by the Middle Level Commissioners officers for the year ended 31 March 2024, we are pleased to provide you with the following recommendations to be considered for implementation. We have included some general points and some points which are related to specific boards.

<u>**General points**</u>

1. **Asset Valuations and Insurances – mainly for residential properties.**

   It is noted that, whilst a large proportion of boards took the option to revalue for insurance purposes their pumping station and residential assets during recent years, there are still some boards that have not followed suit. We have seen elsewhere that such revaluations have sometimes resulted in significant uplifts in value, and as such we would suggest that any remaining boards that have yet to carry out such an exercise do so at the earliest convenience. It should be noted that this is largely in relation to residential property. Should a complete rebuild following an unforeseen catastrophic event be required, current valuations may no longer be appropriate given today's prices which may lead to a shortfall in funds which would have to be drawn out of surplus funds if other financial arrangements were not available.

   We would recommend that in the absence of specific information to the contrary suggesting need for earlier review, that a revaluation exercise be performed for insurance purposes at least every 5 years on all major board assets. This is especially important given the significant increase in material and labour costs seen in recent times as a result of rising inflation and global material shortages. However, we are pleased to note that boards are being asked whether they wish for insurance to be index linked going forward and would strong suggest that all boards agree to this proposal.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

While we have put it to Boards to review pumping station valuations for insurance purposes, as separate statutory authorities it is up to each Board to review and approve what they consider to be an appropriate valuation and your point concerning possible under-insured amounts having to be funded directly by the Board following an event has been highlighted previously. We are recommending that Boards should look to index link valuations and we will continue in asking all Boards again to consider this at subsequent meetings, along with consideration of current valuations. Valuation of residential property is an area we have and will continue to focus on for future meetings.

A number of Boards have recognised the potential impact of increased costs on valuations and have taking steps to re-value, however, the consulting engineer is currently reviewing the methodology for valuation of pumping stations, to ensure there is a robust process, which will be then used going forward.

This is an area already programmed to be reviewed every five years and hopefully with indexing we may not require such individual valuations going forward.

2. Employee Benefits

Following HMRC's announcement that double cab pickups would be treated as cars rather than vans for benefit in kind purchases from 1st July 2024 this was swiftly reigned in following a backlash from affected parties, largely from the construction and agricultural sectors. Given the new Labour governments need to increase the tax receipts into the Treasury this could be a measure that is revisited and we would advise that you be mindful of any changes that arise in the forthcoming Autumn Budget, although nothing has been confirmed at this stage.

With regards to other employee benefits, we note that where applicable these are being recognised as benefits in kind and disclosed on the form P11d, we would encourage the value of these benefits to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that these are reflective of what the employee receives, especially where some boards providing the living accommodation to their employees.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

We are aware of the case and potential implications to employees of classification of vehicles, and for this and other areas will be following the autumn budget closely. Generally, we do not make changes concerning additional passenger/load capabilities to that of the original manufacturer's specification, which are relied upon alongside the HMRC guidance when designating vehicles for taxation/benefits in kind.

The benefit charge for living accommodation is calculated in accordance with HMRC recommended valuations. We have started payrolling any standard benefits but are currently unable to do this for accommodation and use of vehicles.

3. Provisions

We are pleased to note that, in the main; provisions recognised within the accounts of applicable boards are being monitored and written back as required. There are still isolated cases where provisions are "brought forward and carried forward" that relate in excess of the standard life of debt, being 6 years. Whilst we are satisfied there is reasonable rationale for their retention we would question whether payments could be reinforced if the life of debt has been exceeded, with the exception of amounts recognised in respect of development contributions. We would encourage continued review of provisions brought forward from prior years, especially those exceeding the standard life of debt, writing these off as appropriate, with board approval as appropriate.

Client comment:

As part of the year end accounting procedures, provisions/balances are looked at on an individual basis and decisions made on relevance as to retain or to write back.

4. Budget figures

We refer to the significant overspend arising in the 2023/24 against the budget set for the same period. We understand that this is largely due to the unprecedented levels of rainfall experienced during the 2023/24 winter period which in turn resulted in the most significant volume of water ever pumped by the organisation. Which has resulted in pumping stations operating at capacity for a number of months, using significantly more fuel and electricity to enable this.

Given the change in weather patterns globally and in our region, we would recommend that a higher budgeted energy and fuel cost be provided for in the budget going forwards, and that the organisation maintain sufficient reserves to combat any such deficiencies in the future. Consideration should also be taken as to whether budgets should be updated for actual results if significant variances are apparent, to ensure they remain meaningful to the individual boards to which they relate.

Client comment:

As part of the finance regulations, we are required to carry out a budget monitoring exercise during the course of the year. For those Boards that have a relevant meeting, this is reviewed by the Board at their autumn/winter meeting. For all other Boards the monitoring exercise is completed as at the end of the calendar year, at this point the majority of the drain maintenance works have been completed, as would be any planned maintenance works at pumping stations. The expenditure to-date is then forecast to the end of the financial year and compared to the budget and initially sent to the chairman for review. Depending on the outcome of the monitoring exercise depends on whether it is considered appropriate to hold an emergency meeting. However, it is likely that if there were an extraordinary event the Board would be aware "in real time" and appropriate action taken at that point.

It is not policy to update budgets depending on levels of expenditure as there is no ability to increase revenue through rates and special levy once they have been set. The original budget is therefore used as comparative to analyse variances of actual expenditure against.

We have started to use a 5-year average for pumping volumes, calculating these against actual/anticipated electricity unit rates. For the 2024/2025 rate setting process we started to build in a 'climate change factor' into the 5-year average calculation, which will be refined for future years. While aware of the need to hold sufficient balances, this was highlighted during the 2023/2024 storm events and as well as having climate change awareness in the budget setting process Boards also were required to take steps concerning the reinstatement of balances depleted during the year.

It is intended to introduce a range of Key Health Indicators for all boards, part of which will be taking into account the impact of climate change on budgets and relevant level of balances required.

5. Surplus Funds

In previous years we have communicated the importance of investing cash assets that are not required to fund operational needs, to combat the erosion of these liquid assets through inflation. We are pleased to see that the organisation have taken heed of this advice and made a number of deposits with Barclays, in addition to discussing the potential pooling of cash resources with IDB's under their administration to gain access to higher rates of interest. Whilst inflation has now fallen back to 2%, the lowest level in nearly three years, it is important to continue to reinvest and "sweat" these assets going forward.

Client comment0:

We are currently making treasury deposits for individual Boards within the mandated authority given by each authority but need to manage this with specific cash flow requirements while also making consideration to having balances available for potential event situations requiring immediate cash. We will be monitoring additional staff time required to manage this while discussing matters further with our bankers.

6. Rental of Land

It was previously noted that some IDB's were renting out land to tenants at lower than market rate and that this should be reviewed to ensure value for money principles were being applied.

We are happy to note that some IDB's have increased the rental values of land to market rates, although there are still some IDB's where the rental value is significantly below market value and we advise that the market values are increased for these boards to ensure value for money principles are applied going forwards.

Client comment:

Boards which have land holding for rent generally review rents in accordance with tenancy agreements and use local land agents for guidance. A number of Boards have small holdings of land which are let at reasonable rates with a view to keep the land tidy and in good order as they are not necessarily commercially viable. A number of Boards have slamp land, which cannot be considered the same as general agricultural land for rental purposes. All Boards look to get the best rents available, but these are relevant to the size and type of land being let.

7. Financial Regulations

Last year we noted that the Financial Regulations were due to be updated by the end of the year, following a delay due to the retirement of the Chief Executive and appointing of the new Chief Executive/Clerk in February 2023. We are pleased to see that during 2024 the boards are reviewing and approving the updated Financial Regulations and Financial Code and look forward to considering this area during the course of the 2024/25 internal audit.

Client comments:

There will be a full review of the provision of clerking services and will be, as has been mentioned reviewing these regulations for presentation to boards for the 2025 meeting season.

8. Bank Transfers

We are satisfied with the accuracy of bank and cash balances and have successfully reconciled these to the underlying accounting records. We note that transfers between bank accounts are being recorded as movement per-month in the accounting records, on enquiry this was due to time constraints experienced within the finance department during the financial year. Whilst we are satisfied that reconciliations have been carried out manually correctly, we would recommend that all bank movements are fully reflected in the postings to the accounting software of the board.

Client comment:

Concerning audit point 5 – surplus funds, to maximise returns within the mandated authority with Barclays we are required to operate linked accounts, with receipts/payments being made from the standard current account. This account has a fixed balance which is adjusted following receipts/payments to it – surplus balances above the fixed limit transferred to the Business Premium account, deficit balances below the fixed amount transferred from the Business Premium account to the current account. These transfers are adjusted through the accounting software in relation to the statement frequency, with both accounts being fully reconciled – a credit in one account being matched with a debit in the other. Current staff resources do not allow for additional time to be spent transferring individual values, the net transfer for the statement being made – as we are doing this for around 28 accounts this currently provides the best value for money to the boards.

9. National Saving & Investment bank accounts

We understand that a formal complaint has been lodged with National Savings & Investments. Firstly in relation to the organisation and its administered entities desire to change the signatories on the investment accounts held with this organisation and secondly due to the fact that bank statements for the period to 31 March 2024 have not been received for the majority of boards. As a result interest receivable has had to be estimated, we have considered the estimations and are happy that these are reasonable by reference to the last received statement and the applicable interest rate. We look forward to reviewing the position in the 2024/25 financial year.

Client comment:

This was an unfortunate situation but to recognise the interest in the correct accounting period estimates were made. Differences between estimates and actuals will be adjusted through the 2024/2025 accounting statements.

10. Website Publication

We note that there has been, for a number of years, significant information available to the public. We note that for some boards the latest information does not appear to have been updated, for example the JPAG practitioner guide on the website across all the boards has not been updated since the 2018/19. An updated version of JPAG guide is made available each year.

The same situation related to the Annual Return Form (DEF-IDB1), which appeared have not been updated since year ended 31 March 2022.

We would recommend that all items are updated on the website for applicable boards as soon as practicable, or remove if regulations do not require such information to be published on the website.

Client comment:

Every effort is made to update the relevant pages of all authorities in an efficient and timely manner and in accordance with the regulations.

Your comment is noted and procedures are being amended concerning this for the future.

11. Outstanding old cheques and unreconciled transactions

We are pleased to note that the majority of old outstanding cheques and unreconciled transactions are being written off across all Board in the timely manner. However, there was the isolated cases where this has not occurred. We would suggest that concerted effort is made to ensure all old and unreconciled transactions are written off as soon as it is clear that such transactions will not be paid in or received.

Client comment:

Bank reconciliations should be looked at and cleared for older unpresented transactions, however, these will initially be transferred to debtor/creditor until their statutory standard life has expired. For 'house-keeping' these will be looked at as part of the year-end processes.

12. Fees for the service of District Officers and Pump Attendants

We have noted that not all boards are approving payment rates for the services rendered by District Officers and/or Pumping Attendant during the board meetings, instead approval is confirmed as a percentage increase, generally being in line with the Middle Level Commissioners award.

We appreciate that the board is approving the payment lists, where the amount is specified. However, we would suggest to include the amount to the discussion during the meeting and confirm the approved sum in the minutes as per prior years.

Client comment:

District Officer/pump attendants are contracted services and the boards are approving an amount for the provision of these services, however, the point is noted and the actual amount payable discussed at the meeting should be recorded in the minutes.

Specific Points

Nightlayers IDB

During our review it was noted that land sold during the year was not recorded on the fixed asset register. Our subsequent enquiries found that as the land was considered of minimal value individually this was included within the adjoining pumping station's valuation and was within the footprint of the old pumping station site. The consideration achieved is higher than would generally be expected due to its importance to a local developer.

We would suggest that you consider whether any other parcels of land held by administered boards could be sold in similar circumstances and if so, whether the valuation individually or as part of the overall pumping station valuation is appropriate.

Client comment:

While we are aware of these circumstances the Nightlayers position was rare. We will monitor sites which could have areas with potential for re-sale, substantial value can only be attached after developers make applications and this proves to be the only access. Unless these circumstances arise an uplift in valuation will not be possible.

Waldersey IDB and Hundred of Wisbech IDB – Joint Pumping Arrangement

As in previous years it is noted that there is a discrepancy between debtor held in Waldersey IDB and the creditor held in Hundred of Wisbech IDB.

Waldersey IDB – Debtor	£92,912.67
Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Creditor	£93,919.96
Difference	**£1,007.29**

We are pleased to note that this difference is insignificant for the current year. The difference arises due to the accounts of Hundred of Wisbech IDB being completed before Waldersey IDB, leading to a provision being required in the former's books in the absence of more accurate information being available. The difference is adjusted in the following year's Accounts for Hundred of Wisbech.

We note that there have been discussions to potentially amalgamate the two boards, this would eradicate the anomaly. However, in the absence of this, we suggest that meetings and account preparation periods be brought into line, if possible, to eradicate this issue.

Client comment:

These costs relate to the contribution for the costs of the shared pumping facility and at the time of production of the year end accounting statements discussions were taking place concerning potential changes to the contribution as a result of changes in land use. A new proposal had been put forward which was broadly approved by both Boards.

There are no current plans to change meeting dates so as one set of accounts is finalised before the other there is likely to remain creditor/debtor position in both sets of accounts although now that all older balances have been cleared, any in-year balance should be cleared, generally a year in arrears.

At the 2024 meetings for both Boards amalgamation was discussed and both Boards have approved to enter into discussions concerning a potential amalgamation between the Boards.

March East IDB

During our review it was noted that the pumping station attendants' payments were not all authorised during the year. This included an additional payment to the Binnimoor pumping station's attendant following him taking over from the previous attendant. We understand following discussion with the board that this was the result of an error in the minutes as the fees' amount was not specified, but the payments were clearly approved by the board. We would suggest that the board considers their internal processes for ensuring the accuracy of minutes.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

The services of pump attendant are carried out by contractors and the Board approves the payment for these services. Procedures have been looked at to ensure proper recording in the minutes.

Hundred of Wisbech

We noted that a parcel of land has been transferred to the board during the 2023-24 year with the attenuation pond, sized at approximately 1 acre. This land was estimated by the Chairman and District Officer to have a value totalling £5,000, a value approved by the Board. We have not been provided with any professional valuation or justification with regards to this valuation. We understand that the land cannot be used for development or agriculture, making it difficult to value due to the lack of specific use.

We understand that the consideration of land valuation has conducted after the year end and details should be included in the next published minutes related to June 2024 meeting.

We look forward to reviewing this in due course.

<u>*Client comment:*</u>

This area is designated as an attenuation pond, holding surface water to discharge at a controlled rate into the District System. The valuation takes into account its use and therefore limited value. In view of this and to maintain value for money for the Board it was agreed by the officers of the Board not to engage professional valuers.

Manea & Welney

During our review, it was noticed that the Debtors Report showed a significant unallocated amount of £1,456,606.99. Following discussion with the client, we understand that this is an isolated incident related to software issue and not down to the human error. We are satisfied that balance showing on the Debtors Report is correct and no difference was identified.

We take this opportunity to thank your staff involved in our audit for their assistance and cooperation in achieving substantial completion by the stated target deadlines. We trust that the engagement team have not caused significant disruption during the execution of their procedures.

Yours sincerely,

Whitings LLP

Whitings LLP

Appendix 3

Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Administered by:

middle level commissioners

Governance

Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management

1 Issued

1.1 This policy is issued and has been adopted by the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board.

1.2 The policy was last reviewed and republished in May 2025 and will be reviewed at least every five years.

2 Introduction

Purpose

2.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board to provide a public statement of the Boards' approach to its management of water levels and flood risk within their District (the District). The Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board are constituted by order of Parliament operating under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and is designated as a flood risk and coastal erosion 'Risk Management Authority' (RMA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

2.2 The Board serves the local community by managing water levels in ordinary watercourses and other water infrastructures within the District to mitigate against the risks from flooding and drought. In delivering its functions the Board will meet its environmental obligations and commitments and seek opportunities to enhance the environment. The Board recognises their responsibility for good governance, local accountability and financial security, achieving value for money from all its activities. As an independent public body the Board are committed to the pursuit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.3 It should be noted that although this document refers to 'flood and coastal erosion risk management' (FCERM) the District is not affected by coastal erosion.

Background

2.4 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has policy responsibility for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England. The Environment Agency is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. Lead Local Flood Authorities (unitary authorities or county councils) are responsible for developing, maintaining and applying a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas. Delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood risk and coastal erosion "Risk Management Authorities" (RMA), which includes the Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board.

2.5 This Policy Statement sets out the Board's approach to meeting the national policy aims and objectives in this area, as stated in the *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England 2020* (the National Strategy); the statement will be revised to reflect future revisions of the National Strategy. It summaries what plans the Board have in place to manage water levels and reduce flood risk, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment, and ensuring good governance and local accountability. Copies of this Policy Statement are available from the Board's office at Middle Level Offices, 85 Whittlesey Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AH. Digital copies can be downloaded from the Middle Level Commissioners website: www.middlelevel.gov.uk.

3. Governance and local accountability

3.1 The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures enable effective representation of and accountability to drainage rate payers and the occupiers of non-agricultural land within the district, including elections in line with the requirements of the Land Drainage Act 1991, and timely engagement with charging authorities to fill vacancies in seats allocated to appointed members.

3.2 Board members must take decisions objectively in their best interest and uphold the ethical standards expected of public officeholders. Board members must adhere to the Board's Members Code of Conduct, including the seven principles of public life (Nolan Principles). The Board will make sure that there is suitable training in place for board members and staff, including on financial and environmental matters as appropriate.

3.3 Board members must declare financial and other interests relevant to their function with the Board. Board members will recuse themselves as appropriate where conflicts of interest may occur in relation to procurement, contract management and decision making.

4. Delivering the National Strategy's policy aim and objectives

Aim

4.1 The overall aim of the National Strategy is to ensure the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed by using the full range of options in a co-ordinated way. The Strategy states that communities, individuals, voluntary groups and private and public sector organisations will work together to manage the risk to people and their property, facilitate decision-making and action at the appropriate level, and achieve environmental, social and economic benefits, consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

Objectives

4.2 The 2011 Strategy sets out five objectives in pursuance of the overall aim as follows.

- understand the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, working together to put in place long term sustainable plans to manage these risks and making sure that other plans take account of them;
- avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood and coastal erosion risk and being careful to manage land elsewhere to avoid increasing risks;
- build, maintain and improve flood and coastal erosion management infrastructure and systems to reduce the likelihood of harm to people and damage to the economy, environment and society as well as achieving wider environmental benefits;
- increase public awareness of the risk that remains and engaging with people at risk to encourage them to take action to manage the risks that they face and to make their property mor resilient; and

- improving the detection, forecasting and issue of warnings of flooding, co-ordinating a rapid response to flood emergencies and promoting faster recovery from flooding.

4.3 The Board supports the national aim and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels and the Board's policy and approach will be consistent with them.

5. Flood risk and water level management in the Board's District

5.1 The District has been determined to derive benefit, or avoid danger, as a result of drainage operations. As such the whole of the District is at some risk from flooding, but that risk is managed wherever it is practically, environmentally and financially viable[1].

5.2 The Board makes decisions regarding flood risk within the District taking into account the following:

- assets in place considering design standard and life;
- Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority flood risk strategies, plans and maps; and
- other information such as the history of flooding and land use impacts.

5.3 The following outlines the key details of the District:

- Total area of the drainage district: 4680 ha
- Catchment area draining to and including the District: 4696 ha
- Area of Agricultural Land: 4638 ha
- Area of other (non-agricultural) land: 42 ha

5.4 Assets for which the Board have operational responsibility:

- Water Level Control Structures: 22 No
- Watercourses (maintained): 67 km
- Raised embankments: 0.1 km
- Reservoirs: 0 ha
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS): 0 no
- Pumping Stations: 2 no

5.5 Assets within or adjacent to the District that are maintained by the Environment Agency:

- Main Rivers: 12 km
- Raised embankments/flood walls: 12 km
- Pumping Stations: 1 no

[1] It should be noted that the Land Drainage Act 1991 provides the Board with statutory powers to carry out works of maintenance and improvement for land drainage and flood defence purposes, rather than imposing a duty on the Board to carry out such works.

6. Building, maintaining and improving flood and coastal erosion risk management systems

6.1 Through the operation, maintenance and improvement of watercourses and other water control assets within the District, the Board seeks to achieve a general standard of water level management that enables navigation, the drainage and irrigation of agricultural land, reduces flood risk to developed areas, and sustains environmental features throughout the District.

6.2 The Board monitors and reviews the condition of its watercourses and other assets, particularly those designated as critical, over-spilling from which could affect people and property. Consistent with the resultant needs established, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the assets is commensurate with the standards required. The programme is reviewed periodically by the Board to ensure it is delivering the appropriate condition.

6.3 Where standards are not at the desired level, improvement works will be sought where they are considered to be practical and financially viable by the Board. Where improvement works meet the criteria set by Defra, financial support will be sought from the Government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding. Where appropriate works will be undertaken in partnership with other Risk Management Authorities and take opportunities to work with natural processes.

6.4 Work for and by the Board will be carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money taking due regard of local flood risk management requirements and strategies, opportunities for partnership working, environmental obligations and guidance available from Defra, the Environment Agency and other organisations.

6.5 The Board's powers to carry out water level and flood risk management works are permissive (i.e. the Board are not obliged to carry out works) and their resources are limited. The Board's policy is therefore to designate what they consider to be the most important watercourses in the District as "District Drains" and prioritise their resources to the appropriate maintenance and, where necessary, improvement of such channels and associated structures. The watercourses and structures so designated will change over time as necessary but the current designated watercourses and structures are shown on the plan attached to this Statement.

6.6 Other watercourses usually are the responsibility of other bodies or the adjoining owners. The Board will only take action in respect of these latter watercourses where resources are available and where it is in all the circumstances appropriate for the Board to becomes involved, bearing in mind the powers available to other persons or bodies.

6.7 The Board have a supervisory duty, under section 1(2)(d) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 over all matters relating to the drainage of land in their District and will, under this duty where appropriate advise others regarding the undertaking of works when it is not appropriate for the Board to exercise its own powers.

6.8 The Board will also seek to ensure, where possible that assets managed by other risk Management Authorities, which also reduce flood risk to the District, are maintained at a satisfactory standard and may enter into a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement with another Risk Management Authority to achieve better value for money when carrying out work to reduce flood risk.

7. Regulation of activities – avoiding inappropriate development and land management

7.1 The Board will take appropriate steps to help riparian owners understand their responsibilities for maintenance, byelaw compliance and environmental regulations.

7.2 The Board will regulate as necessary, using available legislative powers and byelaws, the activity of others to ensure their actions within, alongside, and otherwise impacting its drainage system do not increase flood risk, prevent the efficient working of drainage systems, or adversely impact the environment.

7.3 The potential impact on flood risk from future development both within the District and the wider catchment draining into the District, is fully recognised by the Board. The Board will take an active role in the assessment of local plans, major development and, individual (planning) applications, to prevent inappropriate development and land use to ensure that flood risk is not increased. This will include, where appropriate, providing pre-application advice and checking of flood risk assessments.

7.4 Where appropriate the Board will seek contributions from developers to cover the cost of consultations and advice and for both immediate and longer term works necessary to mitigate against any resultant increase in flood risk. Such contributions will be recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated technical guidance.

7.5 The Board will where appropriate designate structures or features affecting flood risk using Section 30 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

8. Communication and transparency

8.1 The Board will publicise the local risks from flooding, the reasons for managing water levels within the District and articulate the efforts being undertaken by the Board to manage water levels and flood risk as well as the steps the local community and land managers can take to assist in its management.

8.2 The Board will be open and transparent in its actions and decisions. The Board will comply with the requirements set out in the relevant Local Government transparency code.

8.3 The Board will provide an overview of the objectives and costs of its water level management operations by publishing on its website:-

- A record of the watercourses it periodically maintains;
- A statement of the types of general maintenance activities it routinely undertakes and why;
- Its Annual Report to Defra (IDB1 Form); and
- Approved Board minutes and papers.

8.4 The Board will seek views and respond to enquiries from the local general public in this regard and work with local partners to build a culture within which watercourses are seen as vital to managing flood risk, and enhancing habitat and amenity. Every effort will be made to dissuade abuse of watercourses.

8.5 The Board invite any comments regarding the condition of its system, which could assist with the management of water levels.

9. Working together

9.1 The Board will co-operate and share information with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion flood risk management function. The Board will contribute to strategies, plans and consultations relevant to its catchment and functions.

9.2 The Board will assist the Environment Agency wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, and assist Risk Management Authorities where necessary during flood emergencies. The Board will participate as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.

9.3 The Board have provided the Environment Agency and other local Risk Management Authorities with information on the major flood defence assets for which they are responsible. The information is available from the Environment Agency.

9.4 The Board will seek to work with all relevant local organisations, in carrying out its flood and coastal erosion risk management functions and environmental obligations.

10. Environmental Measures

10.1 The Board have nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 and Amendments 2011, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, the Environment Act 2021, and as a competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

10.1.1 Further to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021, the Board will review their Water Level Management Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans with reference to the local nature recovery strategy and relevant species conservation or protected site strategy for their areas.

10.2 Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work constitutes vegetation control and desilting and is often a vital and routine requirement. Whilst inevitably some short-term impacts will arise, this management is often essential to maintain the distinct assemblage of aquatic habitat and species present in the District. Such work will be carried out in a way that manages the potential risks to the environment. The Board have access to environmental expertise from their Ecology and Environmental Services Manager and have a Biodiversity Action Plan, developed according to ADA and Natural England guidelines, which indicate the way in which their functions can be carried out in a way appropriate to the environment and how the environment can be enhanced. The Board maintain only a small proportion of the total watercourse length in the District, the significant majority being the responsibility of the adjoining land owners or of other bodies.

10.3 When carrying out work, be it maintenance or improvement, and consistent with the need to maintain satisfactory flood protection standards, the Board will aim to:-

- Avoid any unnecessary or long term damage to agricultural interests and to natural habitats and species;
- Carry out the monitoring of any gains and losses of biodiversity and report annually to the Environment Agency; and
- Take appropriate opportunities to achieve multiple environmental outcomes and work with natural processes, wherever possible, including the enhancement of habitats and water bodies within the District.

10.4 The District encompasses no sites of national and international biological or geological interest.

10.5 The Board has no Water Level Management Plan.

10.6 The Board will play its full role in sustaining the Water Level Management Plans prepared for SSSIs to maintain, or bring sites into, favourable condition, in conjunction with Natural England and other interested parties and review the plans in accordance with guidance.

Appendix 4

Internal drainage boards in England

Annual Report for the year ended

31 March 2024

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Law – the following annual report is provided in accordance with Paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to the Land Drainage Act 1991.

No later than 28 February 2025 a copy must be provided to:

- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs via flood.reports@defra.gov.uk
- Asset Management and Engineering, Environment Agency via idbfund@environment-agency.gov.uk
- The Chief Executives of:
  - all local authorities that pay special levies to the Board;
  - all County Councils or London Boroughs within which the Board is situated.

Please complete the form electronically, and please answer **ALL QUESTIONS.**

Please round all cash figures down to nearest whole £.

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Section A – Financial information

Preliminary information on special levies issued by the Board for 2024-25

Special levies information for financial year 2024-25	
Name of local authority	**£**
1. FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	38,110
2. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	27,035
3. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	14,391
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Total	79,536

Section A – Financial information (continued)

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 March 2024

All internal drainage boards must ensure that the Income and Expenditure information provided below is consistent with the Board's annual accounting statements which have been prepared in accordance with proper practices found in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – A Practitioners' Guide to proper practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements March 2023*[1]

	Notes	Year ending 31 March 2024 £
INCOME		
A. Drainage Rates		234,678
B. Special Levies		54,798
C. Higher Land Water Contributions from the Environment Agency		8,470
D. Contributions received from developers/other beneficiaries		46
E. Government Grants (includes capital grants from EA and levy contributions)		
F. PSCAs overall total Breakdown: from EA from other RMAs	 2,700	2,700
G. Loans		
H. Rechargeable Works		5,415
I. Interest and Investment Income		6,876
J. Rents and Acknowledgements		
K. Other Income Wayleave Write back of provisions Consents Insurance claim Metered discharge		 166 50 50 1,396 34,776
Total income		**349,421**
EXPENDITURE		
L. New Works and Improvement Works		
M. Total precept to the Environment Agency		118,827
N. Watercourse maintenance		63,605
O. Pumping Stations, Sluices and Water level control structures		44,513

[1] https://saaa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PractitionersGuide_2023.pdf

P. Administration		20,863
Q. PSCAs		2,700
R. Rechargeable Works		
S. Finance Charges		
T. Biodiversity enhancement and conservation – overall total Breakdown: General, across the whole region SSSI specific, where relevant	 708	708
U. Other Expenditure Insurance		5,521
Electricity costs – overall total Breakdown (if possible): Standing charge (per annum) Unit charge (per annum)	 8,820 225,406	234,226
Fuel (petrol and diesel costs) – overall total Breakdown: Pumping stations Fleet and plant machinery	 9,006 4,016	13,022
Total expenditure		**503,985**
EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS		
V. Profits/(losses) arising from the disposal of fixed assets		25,999
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		**(128,565)**
W. Developers Funds income not applied in year		284,763
X. Grant income not applied in year		

Value of drainage rates outstanding at year end?

0.785 %
£ 1,851.09

Value of special levies outstanding at year end?

0 %
£ 0

Notes:

K. Include all other Income, such as absorption account surpluses (for example plant and labour absorption accounts). Please include sub-total of all other income in the first row and then a breakdown in separate rows below.

L. State the gross cost of undertaking minor capital works that have not been capitalised and the annual depreciation charges of all major schemes that have been capitalised. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the schemes.

M. State the total precept demanded for the year as properly issued by the Environment Agency, in accordance with section 141 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Providing that the precept has been properly issued as before stated it should always be included here, even when the Board has appealed against the amount of contribution, in accordance with section 140 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Where the Board knows with certainty the outcome of any such appeal, it should also include the appropriate accrual/prepayment.

N. State all costs associated with the maintenance of watercourses, meaning work associated with open channels, pipelines, culverts, bridges, etc. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with delivery of the maintenance programme. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.

O. State all costs associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with maintaining and operating the pumping stations, sluices and water level control structures. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.

P. Include the cost of non-technical staff only, office accommodation, annual depreciation of office equipment that has been capitalised, minor office equipment that has not been capitalised, postages, telecoms', stationery, printing, advertising, auditing of accounts, general insurances and all other costs associated with supporting the organisation. Please note that this does not include support costs, which are directly associated with the delivery of front line services. Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.

Q. State all costs associated with the PSCA.

R. State all costs associated with undertaking work for third parties. Plant, vehicle and labour charges should include a fair proportion of the overheads such as depot/workshop costs, employment on-costs, insurances and depreciation, etc. You should also include a fair proportion of the support costs directly associated with undertaking the rechargeable work.

S. Include the cost of servicing any borrowing, in terms of bank/loan/hire purchase Interest payable.

T. State all costs associated with undertaking works – capital or maintenance – that are likely intended to help enhance and/or conserve biodiversity. These costs are likely to be incurred in implementing actions set out in an IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan or other conservation actions. If possible, you should identify the overall costs and break them down into two groups: general across the whole IDB area, and SSSI specific areas (in implementing actions set out in SSSI Water Level Management Plans or SSSI River Restoration Plans). Please do not include electricity or fuel costs as these are captured separately.

U. Include all other expenditure, such as a provision for bad/doubtful debts, write-offs, and absorption account deficits (for example plant and labour absorption accounts). Please include sub-total of all other expenditure in the first row and then a breakdown in separate rows below.

V. For the disposal of assets, state the difference between any proceeds from the sale/disposal of the asset and the cost of the asset less accumulated depreciation.

W. Total balance of developer fund year end.

X. Unspent grant at year end.

Section B – IDB Reporting

Please answer **ALL QUESTIONS**. We will assume a negative response for any that are not answered.

Policy Delivery Statement

Boards are required to produce a publicly available policy statement setting out their plans for delivering the Government's policy aims and objectives. It is recommended that these statements be published on Boards' websites where they have them and reviewed every three years.

1. Is an up to date statement in place and copy (or weblink) provided to Defra, and EA? .... Yes ☒ No ☐

2. What year was your statement last updated?.. 2019

Biodiversity

3. Please indicate whether your Board has a Biodiversity Action Plan ....Yes ☒ No ☐

4. If "yes" is the Biodiversity Action Plan available on your website? ....Yes ☒ No ☐

5. What year was your Biodiversity Action Plan last updated?............................ 2022

6. Have you reported progress on BAP implementation on your website?...................................Yes ☐ No ☒

7. When was biodiversity last discussed at a Board meeting (date)?............................... 23/05/2024

8. Do you have a biosecurity process?..Yes ☒ No ☐

SSSI water level management plans

9. Are you responsible for any SSSI water level management plans?..Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please complete the following table:

Name	Partners	Date of last review	Date of last update

10. Do you contribute towards any SSSI water level management plans?......................................Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please complete the following table:

Name	Partners	Date of last review	Date of last update

11. Area of SSSI with IDB responsible for water level management plan/s..........	0 hectares
12. Area of SSSI with IDB contribution towards water level management plan/s..........	0 hectares
13. Area of SSSI where IDB water level management activities are contributing to recovering or favourable condition?..........	0 hectares
14. Area of SSSI where IDB water level management actions are needed to achieve recovering or favourable condition?..........	0 hectares

Access to environmental expertise

Does your IDB have access to environmental expertise? If so please tick all those options below through which environmental expertise is regularly provided to your IDB:

15. Appropriately skilled Board Members (e.g. Board member from an Environmental Body/Authority) ☐

16. Co-opted members ☐

17. Directly employed staff ☐

18. Contracted persons or consultants ☒

19. Environmental Partners/NGOs ☐

20. Other ☐

If so, please list:

Public sector cooperation agreements (PSCAs)

21. How many active PSCAs are you working on? 1

22. Which risk management authorities are you working with on a PSCA?

Environment Agency	Yes
Lead local flood authority	
Local authority (not a lead local flood authority)	
Internal drainage board	
Water company	
Other	

If other, please list:

23. Please indicate the type of work being undertaken.

Routine maintenance	Yes
Asset operation and monitoring	
Asset repairs	
Support during flood incident	
Support during flood recovery	
Other	

If other, please list:

Asset Management

What system/database does your Board use to manage the assets it is responsible for?

24. ADIS ☐

25. Paper Records ☐

26. Other Electronic System ☒

If so, please list:

Excel

27. Has your Board continued to undertake visual inspections and update asset databases on an annual basis?..Yes ☒ No ☐

28. What is the cumulative total of identified watercourse that the Board periodically maintains?

66.5 kilometres

29. How many pumping stations does the Board operate?

1 pumping station

30. How many pumps does the Board operate?

electric	3
diesel	1
renewable energy pumps (e.g. directly powered by wind, solar, hydro, etc)	
temporary / mobile pumps	
other type of pumps	

31. If other, please list:

32. What is the cumulative design capacity of the Board's pumping station(s) (enter zero if no stations are operated)?

5.77 cm3/sec

Health and Safety

33. Does the Board have a current Health and Safety policy in place? Yes ☒ No ☐

34. Does the Board have a Board Member focused on ensuring that Health and Safety is considered when board decisions are made? Yes ☒ No ☐

35. Does the Board have a responsible officer for Health and Safety? Yes ☒ No ☐

36. Have there been any reportable incidents in the past year? Yes ☐ No ☒

If so, please summarise in the box below:

Guidance and Best Practice

37. Has your IDB adopted a formal Scheme of Delegation? Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your IDB provided, or accessed via a third party, training for board members in the last year in any of the following areas?

38. Governance ☒

39. Finance ☒

40. Environment ☒

41. Health, safety and welfare ☐

42. Communications and engagement ☐

43. Other ☐

If so, please specify:

44. Is your Board's website information current for this financial year? (Board membership, audited accounts, programmes of works, WLMPS, etc)........ Yes ☒ No ☐

45. Has your IDB adopted computerised accounting and rating systems?........ Yes ☒ No ☐

46. Has your board published all minutes of meetings on the website?........ Yes ☒ No ☐

47. Does the Board publish information on its website on its approach to maintenance works and provide contact details to allow for and encourage public engagement?........ Yes ☒ No ☐

48. When planning maintenance and capital works are environmental impacts taken into account and wherever possible best practice applied?........ Yes ☒ No ☐

Has your Board adopted the following governance documents:

49. Standing Orders .... Yes ☒ No ☐

50. Have the Standing Orders been approved by Ministers .... Yes ☒ No ☐

51. Byelaws .... Yes ☒ No ☐

If you have Byelaws, have:

52. you adopted the 2021 model byelaws........ Yes ☒ No ☐

53. Or have you adopted the 2012 model byelaws........ Yes ☐ No ☒

54. the byelaws been approved by Ministers........ Yes ☒ No ☐

55. Code of Conduct for Board Members........ Yes ☒ No ☐

56. Financial Regulations........ Yes ☒ No ☐

57. Register of Member's Interests........ Yes ☒ No ☐

58. Anti-fraud and corruption policy........ Yes ☒ No ☐

Board membership and attendance

59. How many Board members (in total – elected and appointed) do you have on your IDB?	17
60. Seats available to appointed members under the Land Drainage Act 1991.	4
61. Number of elected members on the board at year end.	15
62. Number of appointed members on the board at year end.	1
63. Mean average number of elected members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year.	11

64. Mean average number of appointed members in attendance at each board meeting over the last financial year. | 1

65. Have you held elections (with or without a vote) within the last three years?........................Yes ☒ No ☐

66. If you have held elections, did they comply with the requirements specified by the Secretary of State under Regulation 28 of the Land Drainage (Election of Drainage Boards) Regulations 1938?...........Yes ☒ No ☐

Complaints procedure

67. Is the procedure for a member of the public to make a complaint about the IDB accessible from the front page of its website?..Yes ☒ No ☐

68. Number of complaints received in the financial year?	0
69. Number of complaints outstanding in the financial year?	0
70. Number of complaints referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman?	0
71. Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman?	0

Public Engagement

Set out what your Board has done in this financial year to engage with the public (tick relevant box(es) below):

Published:

72. your completed IDB1 Form ☒

73. press release/s ☐

74. newsletter/s ☐

75. notice/s ☒

76. public consultation ☐

77. updated your IDB website ☒

Media engagement with:

78. national and/or local media e.g. TV, radio, etc ☐

79. national and/or local media e.g. newspaper, magazine, etc ☐

80. trade media ☐

81. social media ☐

Public meetings:

82. Held public meeting/s ☒

83. Attended meetings e.g. Parish Council, local interest group, local flood group, etc ☐

Public events:

84. attended show/event/s e.g. county shows, fairs, etc ☐

85. attended trade event e.g. Flood and Coast, Flood and Water Live, etc ☐

86. hosted IDB open day ☐

Section B: NOTES

Guidance and Best Practice

Has your Board published **all** minutes of meetings on the website? In answering this question, this should apply to all the main Board meetings held in the year and any appropriate meetings the Board has held with external stakeholders.

Board membership and attendance

When referring to **elected members** of the Board, this relates to the number of landowners/drainage rate payers that are elected to the Board.

When referring to **appointed members** of the Board, this relates to the number of members appointed by the local authorities to represent the local council taxpayers.

When referring to mean average number of elected and appointed members in attendance at meetings at each board meeting – **this should be expressed as a number of attendees** and not as a percentage attendance.

With regard to elections, under Schedule 1 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, elected members should hold office for three years, at which point a further election is held. When elections are held, they should comply with the requirements under Regulation 28 of the Land Drainage (Election of Drainage Boards) Regulations 1938 – to advertise and notify local stakeholders accordingly.

Section C – Declaration

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

I confirm that the information provided in sections A-C or with this form is correct.

Signature	S.S. Ablett
Date	18/02/2025
Name in BLOCK LETTERS	MISS SAMANTHA ABLETT
Designation	ASSISTANT TREASURER
Email address	sam.ablett@middlelevel.gov.uk

Appendix 5

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

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.*
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.	Yes	No	N/A	*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:

and recorded as minute reference:

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

Chair

Clerk

WWW.MIDDLELEVEL.GOV.UK

Mrs Martin advised that the report would be taken as read and drew the Boards attention to the resolutions contained therein.

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) Policy Reviews

RESOLVED

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

That the Clerk confirms that there is no Water Level Management Plan in place as noted in the Policy Statement.

c) 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.

d) 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 web-page.

RESOLVED

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

e) Insured Values

The Board reviewed the insurance values and agreed that they should continue to be index linked.

f) 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.

g) 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.

h) DEFRA IDB1 Return

RESOLVED

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

i) 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.

B.2395 Finance Report – Looking Back

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**11**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING BACK**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Note the Budgeting review within Appendix 1.
B. Note the Highland Water contributions
C. Consider and approve the payments detailed within Appendix 2.
D. Consider and approve the Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/2025 within Appendix 3.

Finance Officer's review and key messages

Storm Recovery Grant

Following the setting of the rates for 2024/2025 details concerning the Storm recovery Grant were released and claims had to be submitted within an incredibly tight time-frame. A claim for £118,255.97 was submitted on behalf of the Board for excess winter pumping costs (Tranche 1) which was successful and has now been paid.

Actual Expenditure against Budget

For 2024/2025 the Board had estimated expenditure for the year of £398,961 and set a rate of 62.75p to raise this through agricultural drainage rates and Special Levies. Included in the estimated expenditure was £41,774 to be raised to reinstate balances following the events of 2023/24.

Net Expenditure in 2024/25 was lower than the estimated budget because of several reasons. Rates, Telephone and Insurances were higher than budget because of higher insurance premiums and council tax on the unoccupied bungalow. Repairs and Renewals was over budget, however this included one off expenses of £7,857 for the Bungalow refurbishment which is now occupied. Fuel costs were approximately £43,700 lower than budget, following a relatively average year for pumping volumes. District Labour costs were approximately £8,000 lower because of change in personnel. Administration cost was £5,700 higher than budget due to unbudgeted leaving costs. Other Improvement costs relating to the replacement of Pump 2 in the pumping station was also completed in the year at a cost of £43,487, this was fully funded from the Storm Recovery Grant Trance 2.

As outlined above funded following the setting of the rates for 2024/25 we received a grant for the excess pumping costs from 2023/24, the amount that was recognised to the general fund was £108,795 and is described in more detail below.

Over-all this gives an increase in the Boards General Fund of £171,514 to a balance of £369,694 as of 31st March 2025, the balance on 1st April 2024 being £198,181. The current estimated for a year's expenditure is £357,793 and therefore the board now has the recommended 'year-in-hand' position.

These balances are 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 2025 is included as Appendix 1.

2. Payments for 2024

2.1 Payments are detailed within Appendix 2

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.

3.2 When completing the budget proposal claims were estimated against the likely out-turn for 2023/2024 and the budgeted expenditure for 2024/2025. The winter storm events gave claims significantly more than previous claims but following an understanding that the Environment Agency were able to switch funding within their revenue/capital programmes the full estimated claims were included in the rating proposals. The highland water claim included within the rating estimates was £25,260.49. Following an earlier Government announcement, details were eventually released concerning the Storm Recovery Grant and a claim for the first trance (T1) was submitted in the sum of £118,255.97.

To adjust for this additional funding the relevant elements of the Storm Recovery Grant (T1) need to be adjusted against the highland water claims. The highland water calculation for these additional receipts amounts to £9,460.48, which will be adjusted from the Strom Recovery Grant.

During the autumn of 2024/2025 we were notified by the Environment Agency that they were not able to meet all Highland Water payments in full for 2024/2025, however the RFCC have since made up the difference and we can confirm that the full Highland Water claims have been paid.

3.1 **Storm Recovery Grant – T2A**

3.2 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 2024/2025 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
Mepal PS - Pump 2 Replacement	£43,487	6.87p
	£43,487	6.87p

4. Annual Accounts and Finance papers 2023/2024:

4.1 Annual Return 2024/2025:

To consider the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2025 and the completion of Section 2 of the Annual Return as required in the Audit Regulations. Appendix 3

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

Appendix 1 Budget Review
Appendix 2 Payments for 2024/25
Appendix 3 Annual Accounts & Finance Papers 2024/25

Appendix 1

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BUDGET MONITORING 2024/2025

		Approved budget 2024/2025 £	Actual to 30th November 2024 £	Forecast to 31st March 2025 £
1	Rates, Telephones and Insurances	7,150	10,284	11,250 [A]
2	Drainworks, Repairs and Renewals (including Environmental measures)	30,000	8,998 [B]	30,000 [C]
	Drainage Channel - Cranbrook	0	0	0
3	Oil and Electricity	153,000	43,866 [D]	153,000 [E]
4	District Labour	53,750	37,576	53,576
5	Administration Charge, Health and Safety Contract, Audit Fee, Printing, Stationery, Advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions Etc.	21,400	12,706	23,570
6	Environment Agency - Precept	122,392	122,392	122,392
7	Plant Replacement	25,000 [F]	0	25,000 [F]
8	Reinstatement Of Balances	41,774 [G]	0	41,774 [G]
		454,466	235,821	460,561
	LESS :			
	Use Of Balances	0	0	0
	Revenue Income	55,505	11,459	53,384 [H]
		398,961	224,362	407,176

	Approved budget 2024/2025 £	Actual to 30th November 2024 £	Forecast to 31st March 2025 £
General Fund			
Open balance	198,181	198,181	198,181
Rates Raised - 62.75p	398,960	398,960	398,960
Net Expenditure	398,961	224,362	407,176
Storm Recovery/Balances		108,795	150,569
Close balance	198,180	481,575	340,534

Remarks

A -	Increased Insurance Premium and Rates on Bungalow.	
B -	Includes for:	
	Maintenance/general	6,201
	Service/repairs to excavator	919
	Pumping station/general repairs	1,879
		8,998
C -	Includes for:	
	Maintenance/general	7,000
	Service/repairs to excavator	3,500
	Pumping station/general repairs	19,500
		30,000
D -	Includes accounts to August, estimated to March	
E -	Provision based on increased annual pumped volume and estimate for new contract rates from October 2024	
F -	Provision for plant replacement strategy	25,000
G -	Provision for reinstatement of balances reduced by winter 23/24 pumping. Year 1 of 3	
H -	Includes metered discharge (not paid)	20,000
	Includes: Partial Highland Water claim	23,634

DOES NOT INCLUDE RENTAL FRON BUNGALOW

Appendix 2

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Payments 2024/2025 (1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025)

GENERAL ACCOUNT

BE Fuelcards - Diesel	78.62
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 30 litres of Adblue, radiator hose, hose clips, 12' crone and a jug	190.46
Middle Level Commissioners - Badger licence supervision	323.02
Middle Level Commissioners - IDB Health & Safety Re-charge 2023-2024 (Account from COPE Safety Management)	600.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to automatic weedscreen cleaner, pump repairs, installation of floodlights and repairs to diesel cooling system and	8,986.47
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of 4,500 litres of gas oil and additional insurance premium for vehicles (Account from Watson Fuels)	4,253.71
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	705.34
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Planning and development applications)	93.60
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, telephone charges, stationery and travelling	10,410.02
Richard Yardy (2002) Ltd - Installation of external socket at pumping station and test circuit	224.17
Richard Yardy (2002) Ltd - Replacement of 3 x LED outside light fittings at pumping station	744.00
645 Services Ltd - 5,100 litres of gas oil	4,718.52
Witham Oil & Paint (Soham) Ltd - 25 litres of Qualsyn, 2.5 litres of thinners and a box of Rodo tack cloths	121.67
Witham Oil & Paint (Soham) Ltd - 2.5 litres of Supercote Howard Rota Orange, 36 x 400 gm Qualube lithium complex cartridges, 36 x 400gm Qualube lithium EP2 cartridges, grit paper, paint brushes, paint scraper and Craftsman brush	287.06
The Lock Shop - Padlock and keys for pumping station door	42.50
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 20 litres of Adblue, toilet rolls, hand paper, WD40, window cleaner, pop rivets, 6' length of flat steel, 6' length of angle and 5 metres of belting	237.04
Water Resources East - Contribution to operating costs 2024/2025	180.00
TDL Equipment - Supply and fit side glass to Atlas 140W excavator	955.15
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	2.56
EE - Mobile telephone charges	37.36
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	87.94
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	90.91
Wave - Water charges	58.00
Environment Agency - Precept	61,195.85
EE - Mobile telephone charges	30.60
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - Bolts, lock nuts, washers, 10 litres of Adblue filters and coach bolts	78.81
R A Latta Farms Limited - Engraving retirement gift for District Officer (Account from Cambridge Engraving)	94.20
M Latta - Expenses in connection with retirement of the Board's District Officer	2,692.25
Chatteris Cricket Club - Expenses in connection with Board meeting	110.00
Fenland Fire Appliances - Service of fire extinguishers and renovation of dry powder extinguisher	50.40
P J Lee & Sons - Supply of workshop toolbox (Account from Wrights Tools Ltd)	375.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	485.52
TDL Equipment - Repairs to Atlas 140W to excavator	147.26
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	69.29
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - Disposable gloves, sledge hammer and steel wedge	30.48
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	78.16
EE - Mobile telephone charges	28.13

Middle Level Commissioners - Repairs to pump panel (Account from R S Components)	193.64
Middle Level Commissioners - Insurance premium for increase in pumping station valuations (Account from Towergate)	389.95
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of piles and toeboard	431.33
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
EE - Mobile telephone charges	28.13
Cole and Day - Tyre repairs	27.00
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 20 litres of Adblue, light bulb and staple lock	111.42
Anglian Compressors and Equipment Ltd - Service to compressed air equipment	390.51
645 Services Ltd - 3,000 litres of gas oil	2,619.72
Lynx Fire and Security - Annual maintenance of intruder alarm system	199.36
James Cooper - Petrol for strimmer	22.47
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	10.48
Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd. - Annual service of New Holland Tractor AE19 DHK	991.59
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	14.91
Wave - Water charges	66.84
Middle Level Commissioners - Internal audit fees (Whiting & Partners 2023-2024 accounts)	1,662.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	28.13
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	11.68
PKF Littlejohn LLP - Audit Fees (2023-2024 accounts)	1,638.00
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 1 hoe	25.80
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	95.68
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board reports, planning and development applications)	639.00
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	22.88
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	52.39
EE - Mobile telephone charges	17.02
Cropley Green Bodyshop - Insurance excess following accident	250.00
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 80 litres of Adblue, slacker handle, set of quad chains, bolts, lock nuts and bearing fitted to flail	810.78
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	10.96
Middle Level Commissioners - Administration charge, postages, and telephone charges	9,980.77
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	10.48
East Cambridgeshire District Council - Council tax for pumping station bungalow	323.29
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	22.54
Sentry Farms Ltd - Refund of overpayment of drainage rates	3,769.44
British Telecommunications PLC - Telephone charges	168.71
EE - Mobile telephone charges	23.65
N L Hydraulics - Hydraulic hose	112.36
Middle Level Commissioners - Renewal of insurances	8,596.22
Environment Agency - Precept	61,195.85
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 80 litres of Adblue, agri tape, disposable gloves and grease nipples	190.34
Middle Level Commissioners - Insurance premium for the provision of Death in Service to District Officer and supply of road tax for AE65 NMM	522.81
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,186.50
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of electrical installation condituion reports for pumping station (Account from CMS Electrical)	336.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of 3,500 litres of gas oil and waste carrier licence (Account from Watson Fuels)	2,789.60
Middle Level Commissioners - Service and MOT of AE65 NMM	360.85
Middle Level Commissioners - Supply of order books (Account from D Richards)	48.68
East Cambridgeshire District Council - Council tax for pumping station bungalow	324.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	18.00

BE Fuelcards - Diesel	89.24
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	95.14
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	24.23
East Cambridgeshire District Council - Council tax for pumping station bungalow	324.00
Z and R Contracting - Drain maintenance	2,508.00
Wave - Water charges	18.51
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 40 litres of Adblue	79.27
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	509.52
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	22.87
Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd. - Insurance excess and VAT re claim for tractor accident	2,023.13
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	27.20
EE - Mobile telephone charges	18.00
R A Latta Farms Limited - Recharge of job advertisement with Indeed	80.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution (Environmental Officer)	1,115.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Pumping station maintenance	509.52
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 40 litres of Adblue	79.27
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	27.20
East Cambridgeshire District Council - Council tax for pumping station bungalow	324.00
EE - Mobile telephone charges	18.00
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	89.83
Z and R Contracting - Drain maintenance	3,382.00
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	10.48
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	3.55
Association of Drainage Authorities - Subscription 2025	1,029.60
EE - Mobile telephone charges	18.00
Z and R Contracting - Drain maintenance	3,648.00
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 60 litres of Adblue	118.91
L R Boon & Sons Ltd - 2 x 1/4" Jackson fasteners	6.00
Wave - Water charges	43.65
Information Commissioner - Data Protection Registration renewal	52.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Contribution towards retirement gift	100.00
Middle Level Commissioners - Fees (Production of Board report, planning and development applications)	1,519.50
Eon - Electricity supply at the pumping station bungalow	43.70
Lynx Fire and Security - Annual maintenance of intruder alarm system	205.33
Z and R Contracting - Drain maintenance	3,040.00
BE Fuelcards - Diesel	10.48
EE - Mobile telephone charges	18.00
M Latta - Supply and fit flooring at bungalow (Account from Tapi Carpets and Floors)	1,800.00
R A Latta Farms Ltd - Cooker and flooring for bungalow	4,574.00
IMServ - Data collector agreement	192.00
IMServ - Meter adoption fee	72.00
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to pumping station	40,803.59
Corona Energy - Electricity supply to pumping station - Payments on account	248,472.30
District labour	50,429.66
	567,472.46

LABOUR ACCOUNT

District labour - Pearl Pension	798.96
	568,271.42

(NB - Amounts shown include Value Added Tax)

Appendix 3

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

GENERAL FUND

2025				2024			
Mar-31	Expenditure during the year			Apr-01	Balance brought forward		198,180.91
	Precept (EA)		122,391.70				
	Rates, insurances, telephones	10,828.61		2025			
	Repairs & Renewals	18,311.19		Mar-31	Rate income & Special levies	399,034.85	
	Fuel	109,298.77			Irrecoverable	-	399,034.85
	Drainworks	16,805.75					
	District Labour	45,746.90			Interest on Deposit Accounts		2,935.80
	Administration charge, audit fee,				Highland Water Contributions		25,471.50
	printing, stationery, advertising etc	26,433.73	227,424.95		Development Charges		1,872.00
					Private Works		7,910.00
	Improvements:				Consent		100.00
	Pump replacement		43,487.28		Rent		900.00
					Storm Recovery Grant - T1a		108,795.49
	Plant replacement				Storm Recovery Grant - T1b		43,487.28
	Funds raised in year		25,000.00				
	Write back of provisions		689.67				
	Balance carried forward		369,694.23				
			788,687.83				788,687.83

BALANCE SHEET

Capital Section

Liabilities		Assets		
		Bungalow - Pumping Station	250,000.00	
Capital Provisions	3,050,000.00	Pumping Stations	2,800,000.00	
		Plant and Vehicles etc	146,269.41	
		Stock	4,251.68	
	3,050,000.00			3,200,521.09

Revenue Section

General Fund		Ratepayers' Account - Arrears		1,719.48
- Revenue Balance	369,694.23	Value added tax - Refunds due		14,177.53
- Asset replacement	84,352.06	Sundry Debtors		87,020.69
Low Level Restoration at Block Fen				
Account (Redland Aggregates Ltd)	251,832.81	Balance in hand -		
Development Charges Account	36,676.91	Barclays - Treasurer's Account	100,000.00	
Sundry Creditors	136,895.64	Barclays - Business Premium Account	518,555.38	
		National Savings-Treasurer's Account	5,772.56	
		Labour Account	1,684.92	626,012.86
	3,929,451.65			3,929,451.65

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Summary of Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2025

Barclays - Treasurers Account 2024/2025

1st April 2024			31st March 2025		
Balance brought forward		539,639.17	Payments made during the year	567,472.46	
			Transfers to Labour Account	0.00	
31st March 2025			Returned Direct Debits	0.00	
Receipts during the year					567,472.46
Clerk's collection account	639,203.63				
Interest on deposit accounts	7,185.04	646,388.67	Balance carried forward		618,555.38
		1,186,027.84			**1,186,027.84**

National Savings - Treasurers Account 2024/2025

1st April 2024		31st March 2025	
Balance brought forward	5,677.37	Payments made during the year	0.00
31st March 2025			
Interest on deposit accounts	95.19	Balance carried forward	5,772.56
	5,772.56		**5,772.56**

Labour Account 2024/2025

1st April 2024		31st March 2025	
Balance brought forward	2,483.88	Payments made during the year	798.96
31st March 2025			
Transfer from Treasurer's Account	0.00		
Interest on deposit accounts	0.00	Balance carried forward	1,684.92
	2,483.88		**2,483.88**

Barclays Bank PLc

Clients Premium Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2025	100,000.00
Less unpresented cheques	0.00
O/S lodgement	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	**100,000.00**

Labour Account

Balance per Statement as at 31st March 2025	1,684.92
Less unpresented cheques	0.00
O/S lodgement	0.00
Balance per Trial Balance	**1,684.92**

Cash balances as at 31st March 2025

Barclays Bank PLc

Current Account	**100,000.00**
Business Premium Account	**518,555.38**
Barclays Treasury Deposit	**0.00**
Labour Account	**1,684.92**

National Savings

Investment Account per passbook	**5,772.56**
Total reconciled cash balances per accounts	**626,012.86**

Sutton & Mepal IDB
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2025

				Per Annual Return
Line 1	**Balances brought forward**			
	General Fund	19,080.91		
	Development charges account	36,606.11		
	Low level fund	248,156.68		
	Asset Replacement Fund	92,182.65		
			396,026.35	**396,026**
Line 2	**Rates and Special Levies**			
	Agricultural rates	319,423.85		
	Special Levies	79,536.00		
	Penalty	0.00		
	Costs	75.00		
	Write-off	0.00		
			399,034.85	**399,035**
Line 3	**Total other receipts**			
	Interest			
	General fund	2,935.80		
	Development charges account	542.27		
	Low level fund	3,676.13		
	Private works	7,910.00		
	Consent applications	100.00		
	Insurance claim	0.00		
	Highland Water	25,471.50		
	Discharge contributions	1,400.53		
	Metered discharge	0.00		
	Sale of Asset	0.00		
	Water Transfer - EA	0.00		
	Write Back of Provisions	0.00		
	Rent	900.00		
	Storm recovery grant - T1a	108,795.49		
	Storm recovery grant - T2a	43,487.28		
			195,219.00	**195,219**
Line 4	**Staff costs**			
	Wages/salaries	39,774.44		
	National insurance contributions	4,335.39		
	Pension costs	1,637.07		
			45,746.90	**45,747**
Line 5	**Loan repayments**			
	PWLB - Principal	0.00		
	PWLB - Interest	0.00		
			0.00	**0**

Sutton & Mepal IDB
Reconciliation between statement of accounts and Annual Return

Financial year ended 31st March 2025

				Per Annual Return
Line 6	**All other payments**			
	Precept	122,391.70		
	Rates, insurances, telephones	10,828.61		
	Repairs and renewals	18,311.19		
	Fuel	109,298.77		
	Drainworks	16,805.75		
	Administration	26,433.73		
	Development charges fees	0.00		
	Purchase of assets	0.00		
	Improvement Works	43,487.28		
	Write Back of Provisions	689.67		
			348,246.70	**348,246**
Line 7	**Balances carried forward**			
	General Fund	190,594.23		
	Development charges account	36,676.91		
	Low level fund	251,832.81		
	Asset Replacement Fund	117,182.65		
			596,286.60	**596,287**

Reconciliation		
Line 1 + Line 2 + Line 3 - Line 4 - Line 5 - Line 6		596,286.60

Reconciliation to Accounts

Balances carried forward per Annual Return - As above		596,286.60
Add Back:-		
Adjustments for Prior Years	176,204.84	
Depreciation	-29,935.43	
Purchase of Asset	0.00	
		146,269.41
Balances carried forward per Accounts		
General Fund	369,694.23	
Development charges account	36,676.91	
Low level fund	251,832.81	
Asset Replacement Fund	84,352.06	
		742,556.01

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

	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	669,071	396,026	*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	289,476	399,035	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	85,945	195,219	*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	59,100	45,747	*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	589,366	348,246	*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	396,026	596,287	*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	547,800	626,013	*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	3,269,164	3,269,164	*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 15/05/2025

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

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 £118,255.97 for excess winter pumping costs, and £43,487 was received to fund the replacement of pump 2. The Board is now in the recommended 'year in hand' position.

The Chair asked that it be minuted that the Boards thanks are given to all Middle Level staff who assisted with the Tranche 1 and 2 funding bids.

a) Payments for 2024

The Payments were reviewed and accepted.

b) Highland Water Contributions

The Board noted the Highland Water contributions.

c) 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.

B.2396 Finance Report – Looking Forward
Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**12**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**	**Subject:**	**FINANCE REPORT: LOOKING FORWARD**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Andrew Wool/Sam Ablett**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Consider the Finance Officer's summary
B. Fees, remuneration and subscriptions
C. Consider & approve the Agricultural Drainage Rates and Special Levy requirements for 2024/2025

Finance Officer's summary and key messages

As a result of the Storm Recovery Grants being received in 2024/25 (T1a £108,795) as well as an underspend against budget the General Fund sits at £369,694 which represents over a year in hand for expenditure.
For the rating estimates for 2025/2026 standard provisions have been made for general expenditure with specific items included where known. Standard figures have been reviewed and approved with the chairman.

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 2025 with no current indications of possible unit costs. The provision is therefore an estimate of pumping volumes at an estimate of possible new contract rates (5% increase on 2024/25 rates). Members should therefore consider if they think the provision is reasonable when setting the rate.

Members should note that the budget proposal includes for the full recovery of highland water claims of £10,612 and £20,000 for metered discharges into the boards system.

When considering the rate for 2024/2025 members should also consider likely future capital investment requirements at the pumping stations.

1. Fees, Remunerations and Subscriptions

1.1 Subscription to the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) will increase by 6.5%, from £805 to £858 (+ vat) for 2025.

1.2 To consider the District Officer's salary.

1.3 To consider the appropriate reimbursement of the out-of-pocket expenses to Chair & Vice-Chair.

1.4 To consider whether any revisions are necessary in the Board's charges for hiring of plant for private work (last reviewed – May 2024):-

i) Atlas 140W Excavator
£45 per hour in the District (inclusive of operator's wages)
£50 per hour outside the District

ii) Flail mower
£45 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages)
£50 per hour for work carried out for the Environment Agency

iii) Weed boat
£45 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages)

iv) Piling Hammer
£45 per hour (inclusive of operator's wages)

(NB – Travelling time being charged in addition to working time).

3. Rate Requirements for 2025/26

3.1 Appendix 1 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.

3.2 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 2025/26
Appendix 2 Rate Requirements for 2025/26

Appendix 1

SUTTON AND MEPAL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
RATE BUDGET 2025/2026

		Approved budget 2024/2025 £	Actual to 31st March 2025 £	Proposed budget 2025/2026 £
1	Rates, Telephones and Insurances	7,150	10,829	10,500 [A]
2	Drainworks, Repairs and Renewals (including Environmental measures)	30,000	35,117 [B]	32,500 [C]
	Drainage Channel - Cranbrook	0	0	0
3	Oil and Electricity	153,000	109,299	138,500 [D]
4	District Labour	53,750	45,747	53,250
5	Administration Charge, Health and Safety Contract, Audit Fee, Printing, Stationery, Advertising, Association of Drainage Authorities Subscriptions Etc.	21,400	27,123	24,500
6	Environment Agency - Precept	122,392	122,392	124,840
7	Plant Replacement	25,000 [E]	25,000	25,000 [E]
8	Reinstatement Of Balances	41,774 [F]	0	0
9	Improvement Work	0	43,487	0
		454,466	418,994	409,090
	LESS :			
	Revenue Income	55,505	191,472	51,296 [G]
		398,961	227,522	357,793
	Rate Raised 2024/2025	62.75p		

Remarks

A - Increased Insurance Premium

B - Includes for:

Maintenance/general	16,806
Service/repairs to excavator	1,084
Pumping station/general repairs	9,371
Bungalow Refurbishment	7,857
	35,117

C - Includes for:

Maintenance/general	17,000
Service/repairs to excavator	3,000
Pumping station/general repairs	12,500
	32,500

D - Provision based on increased annual pumped volume and increase of 5% for new contract rates from October 2025

E - Provision for plant replacement strategy 25,000

F - Provision for reinstatement of balances reduced by winter 23/24 pumping. Year 1 of 3

G - Includes:

Metered discharge (not paid)	20,000
Highland Water claim	10,612
Rental Income - Bungalow	10,800

Appendix 2

Sutton & Mepal Internal Drainage Board

Rate and levy requirements

UNDER SECTION 37 OF THE LAND DRAINAGE ACT 1991, THE APPROPRIATE PROPORTIONS IN WHICH THE NET EXPENDITURE OF THE BOARD MUST BE BORNE FOR 2025/2026 IS:-

a) Proportion to be borne by the Agricultural Sector – 80.38%

b) Proportion to be borne by Special levy issued to Councils: -

East Cambridgeshire District Council -	3.62%	
Fenland District Council -	9.19%	
Huntingdonshire District Council -	6.81%	19.62%

The product of a rate of 1p in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings is £5,090.

In 2025/2026 a rate of 1p together with corresponding Special levy would raise £6,332.

Revenue cash balance in hand on 31st March 2025 - £369,694.

The estimated net expenditure for the Boards Revenue and Capital Programmes in 2025/2026 is £357,793 and equivalent to: -

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 56.50p

b) a Special levy on East Cambridgeshire District Council of £12,957

c) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £32,885 and

d) a Special levy on Huntingdonshire District Council of £24,342

When setting the rate for 2025/2026 members should give consideration to possible future expenditure.

In 2024/2025 the Board raised a rate of 62.75p together with the appropriate Special levies to raise a total sum of £319,424 which was comprised as follows:-

a) a rate in the £ on Agricultural land and buildings of 62.75p

b) a Special levy on East Cambridgeshire District Council of £14,391

c) a Special levy on Fenland District Council of £38,110 and

d) a Special levy on Huntingdonshire District Council of £27,035.

P BURROWS

Clerk to the Board

May 2025

Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions :

a) ADA subscription

The Clerk reported that ADA have increased subscriptions by 6.5% for 2025, from £805 to £858 (plus VAT).

RESOLVED

That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2025 be paid.

b) District Officers Salary

The Chair proposed that as the District Officer is new in post, and that the salary had been negotiated when he was appointed, that a review is currently not required. Mr Heading proposed that the salary be reviewed in January and this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED

That the District Officers salary be reviewed in January 2026.

c) Chair and Vice Chair Expenses

Mr C Lee gave his appreciation for all that the Chair and Vice Chair do, and the Chair advised that at present the Board is fortunate that the Chair and Vice Chair are able to carry out their duties without payment, but future incumbents of the roles may not be in the position to do this. Mr Angood proposed that any fee levels increases be index linked, but it would be useful to understand what those levels would be. It was agreed not to make any changes, but that the figures be presented at the next meeting.

d) Plant Charges

Mr Heading thought that the current charges look to be in line with other providers. The Chair agreed that they look to be good value, but that the Board must bear in mind that they have a new operative who is less experienced at present but this will change in time. It was agreed to leave the rates the same.

e) Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2025/26.

The Board reviewed the proposed budget for 2025/2026.

RESOLVED

That the budget is agreed.

f) Rate Requirement for 2025/26

The Chair advised that he is thrilled that the budgets enable the Board to be able to consider a reduction in the rate. Mr Angood asked if the additional Ecology Services costs were included in the budget and the Chair confirmed that they were. Mr P Sole said that as a Board they had always increased the rate when they needed to, and so he would like to see the reverse happen, and Mr R Lee added that it is good to support the rate payers in difficult times.

Mr R Lee proposed that the rate of 56.5p be set and this was agreed unanimously.

The Board considered estimates of expenditure and proposals for special levy and drainage rates in respect of the financial year 2025/2026. and were informed by the Clerk that under the Land Drainage Act 1991 the proportions of their net expenditure to be met by drainage rates on agricultural hereditaments and by special levy on local billing authorities would be respectively 80.38% and 19.62%.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £357,793 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

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 £287,609 and £70.184.

iv) That a rate of 56.50p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That a Special Levy of £12,957 be made and issued to the East Cambridgeshire District Council, £32,885 be made and issued to Fenland District Council, and £24,342 be made and issued to Huntingdonshire 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.

B.2397 Middle Level IDB Change

Viz:

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		**Item No:**	**14**
Meeting:	**SUTTON & MEPAL IDB**	**Subject:**	**MIDDLE LEVEL IDB CHANGE**
Date:	**Thursday 22nd May 2025**	**Officer Responsible:**	**Paul Burrows** **On behalf of the working group**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

A. Have an open and objective discussion about their health, their fitness for the future and their reliance and interdependency with the health of all other IDBs within the Middle Level and the Middle Level Commissioners.
B. Respond to the questions posed to inform the approach to detailed design.
C. Gauge the degree of support for taking control of change proactively locally.
D. Provide a £300 contribution towards the costs of developing the detailed design.

1. Recap

1.1 As previously reported to the MLC Board and IDBs administered by the MLC, on 15th February 2024 the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Board Members who sit on more than one IDB within the Middle Level (and those outside the catchment that we administer) had been invited to an informal session in Ramsey to share thoughts about the future IDB governance landscape within the Middle Level and whether action was needed to ensure this was resilient for the future. The consensus from those who attended was that we needed to act and a small working group has been identified to draft an initial case for change.

1.2 The working group met on 5th September 2024 and were joined by Innes Thomson, ADA Chief Executive. The group used the 'Geoff Beel' vision from 2009 as a starting point to discuss the primary drivers for change and the key concerns that any proposed new model would need to take account of. A summary note from the meeting was issued on 9th September 2024.

1.3 The Middle Level Board of the Middle Level Commissioners, recognising their leadership, convening and facilitating role, as well as their interest in the governance and operational health of IDBs within their catchment, approved £10k of seed funding used to commission an outline design report. Gradeas Consulting Limited was engaged to undertake this work.

1.4 The working group met on 16th January 2025 to review the draft report and agree the approach to crucial engagement with IDBs that is essential in moving forward with the work into a detailed design phase.

1.5 The outline design report has been made available to IDB Chairman and Board Members to be read in conjunction with this paper.

2. Case for Change – Key Messages

2.1 There are a variety of factors that contribute to the view that the current IDB governance model within the Middle Level is not sufficiently robust for future generations, with an increasing number of IDBs being in poor financial and membership health today.

a) Changes in agriculture and land-ownership, with fewer family farms reducing the scale of hands-on active IDB membership, along with a general aging demographic.

b) Degradation of pumping stations the majority of which are at the end of their reliable life, with insufficient funds and complex governance arrangements stifling proactive and efficient investment.

c) A steady increase in legislative and statutory responsibilities, along with increased societal and government expectations of IDBs meaning the resources and costs associated with these overheads have become a sizeable proportion of overall expenditure, particularly for smaller IDBs. This is set to increase further.

d) Increasing operational pressures as climate change accelerates and IDBs have to adapt to dealing with extremes of drought and high, intense rainfall, whilst being highly vulnerable to energy costs.

e) The inherent financial dependence upon eligibility, availability and leverage of government grant with responsible investment strategies being beyond the reach of many IDBs' rate and levy payer base.

2.2 Given the two-tier nature of water management within the Middle Level **we collectively are only as strong as the weakest link**, so whilst an IDB may be or may consider themselves relatively fit for the future, they ought to consider the landscape scale position.

2.3 Boards need to be mindful that the scale of change potentially needed in the Middle Level would be beyond the 'business as usual' IDB amalgamations that are ongoing or have happened in recent history and would therefore need significant resourcing to enact and implement. This would need to be programmed and resourced with the Environment Agency and Defra. Even with dedicated and bespoke drive, realistically any change we stimulate now would take a 5-15 year period to come to fruition. The problem ought not to be left to the next generation to fix.

2.4 The five key messages the working group would encourage the Board to consider are:

1. The need to **future-proof** – thinking about the next two generations of farmer, land manager and beneficiary.
2. The ambition to **retain local control** – the increasing risk of change being designed and directed nationally.
3. Our collective ability to inform and **influence** locally, regionally and nationally to strengthen our negotiating position to **lever investment** and policy change, as well as **deliver efficiently and effectively to avoid higher future costs**.
4. The **changing representation** within IDB membership given changes in land-use, development and water level management.
5. The need for a more **cost-effective delivery model** with overhead costs proportionate to expenditure.

3. Outline Design – Questions for IDBs and individual Board Members

3.1 The approach taken to the outline design has been an objective, analytical one driven by readily available date. Collectively we need to add the operational view and Middle Level knowledge to focus and scope the next stage of detailed design.

3.2 Having reviewed the draft outline design report the working group debated the outline options and despite a range of differing views, they suggest that:

a) The option of one or two IDBs is not progressed to detailed design as it was felt that this would create an entity that is too big and would arguably be as cumbersome to govern and service as the existing model. There is little appetite for becoming the largest IDB in the country.

b) Options for five or six IDBs are not developed, supporting the view and rationale presented within the report (Section 7).

c) Options for three and four IDBs are progressed to detailed design.

3.3 Alongside seeking the views of IDBs via this paper the working group suggested that an online form be made available for individual Board Members to also submit their views and that in parallel to this engagement we write to the following seeking their view and steer:

a) Local Authorities, including Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs)

b) Environment Agency

c) Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC)

d) Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)

e) Defra

3.4 Questions for IDBs to consider and feedback via the Chairman to the MLC Chief Executive by close on Friday 4th July 2025.

Q1	**On a scale of 1-10, do you consider that there is a need for change?** 1 = don't see a need to change to 10 = radical reform is long overdue.
Q2	**What are your hopes and fears for the future and within any new model?**
Q3	**Do you consider that your IDB is fit for the future?** Yes or No – Please explain your answer.
Q4	**What are the current strengths of your IDB that you wish to see retained within any new model and what are the weaknesses you wish to see mitigated?**
Q5	**Do you agree that the options of one, two, five and six IDBs are not progressed to detailed design?** Yes or No – Please explain your rationale if you disagree.
Q6	**Which options to you feel warrant progressing to detailed design, or have you an alternative suggestion?**
Q7	**Do you have a preferred option from within the outline design options of three and four IDBs?** Yes or No **-** If yes, which option and explain why.
Q8	**The report references a number of considerations that could be considered further within detailed design** *eg specific boundaries, differential rates, ringfencing accrued budgets, operational districts, employee and the service delivery model.* **Which of these is most important to you and why? Have you any specific issues or observations you would like to be assessed?**
Q9	**Are you supportive of any change being designed and led locally and what role would you like to play within this?**
Q10	**Have you any other feedback or issues that you feel have not been considered within the work so far?**

4. Next steps and potential timescales

4.1 The aim is for feedback to be consolidated over summer and reviewed by the working group in September 2025.

4.2 If human and financial resources are available and the feedback corroborates the need to act, the detailed design will then be scoped and commissioned with the ambition to present the results and seek IDB approval to a preferred option at their 2026 meetings.

Author Name: Paul Burrows
Role:
Chief Executive, Middle Level Commissioners

Working group members:
Mick Mottram, Michael Dale, Emma Alterton, Sam Johnson, David Boyce, Jonathan Brown, Hugh Whittome, Marc Heading, Richard Price, Paul Burrows (plus other MLC staff inputs*)*

Mrs Martin referred to the Clerks Report relating to the Middle Level IDB Change and provided a precis of the report. Mr Angood added that the main suggestion of the report is that the Board amalgamate with Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners.

Mrs Martin advised the Board that their comments were sought and that they were requested to provide their feedback through the Chair. Mr Criswell was concerned that there were questions not covered in the report, including the local government perspective, economies of scale, and efficiencies. He thought that a scoring rating would help to identify the most appropriate solution. He wanted to understand the amount of cost savings, the resilience of the options, the risk/difficulties of amalgamations, and the bottom-line scoring of these options. He agreed to email his views to the Chair for feeding back.

Mr Heading added that the potential changes apply to Boards within the Middle Level catchment area. Amalgamations are slow and the piecemeal approach of the past may not be suitable for today. This kind of review occurs only once in a generation. Mr R Lee hoped that the Board would gain from the future Block Fen Flood Alleviation proposals and asked how new assets would be shared with neighbours. The Chair thought that future amalgamations would pull Boards into working together, with large scale infrastructure like St Germans in place, and allowing Welches Dam to be removed.

The Board agreed that they would feed back their thoughts to the Chair and he would submit their response. The Board also agreed to the requested financial contribution to the next stage of the study.

RESOLVED

> That a £300 contribution be made by the Board towards the cost of developing the detailed design.
>
> That thoughts be fed back to the Chair for his submission.

B.2398 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

> That next Meetings of the Board be held on 15th January 2026 at 8.30am, and 21st May 2026 at 8.30am including inspection, both at Chatteris Cricket Club.

B.2399 Any Other Business

The Chair advised the Board of an issue where a short length of drain has been allowed to grow over, and the 9m Byelaw strip has not been enforced. There has been a change of ownership in the land, and the District Officer would like access to the strip to carry out works. The previous owners allowed spoil to be deposited on one side, but there has been a change of views and the Board would now like to deposit spoil on both sides but this is not possible.

He advised that he is raising this as all Board members need to keep a close eye on all of the district drains. Once things become the norm it is difficult to go back to how they should be. If a landowner agrees to take spoil only on their side this needs to be recorded in writing, this can then be reversed in future. Once an area becomes woody and tree lined, it is difficult to go back.

Mr R Lee advised that he had previously purchased land with a covenant that spoil cannot be taken, but the Chair pointed out that from a Board point of view the easiest solution is to avoid these things happening in the first place.

With no other items being raised the meeting closed at 12.10pm.

……………………………………………..
Chair

……………………..
Date