

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 21st May 2026	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. The Board consider the recommendations for the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and grant funding and to confirm acceptance of recommendations to the Consulting Engineer.**

1. Summary of Key Planning Issues

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

2. Technical Services Overview

A new Senior Planning & Consenting Officer, Emma Ryder, joined the team at the beginning of March. She had been working for us on a consultancy basis since November last year and she has extensive experience in flood risk, economics and sustainable drainage. Emma is the first appointment in an ongoing recruitment campaign to better manage the increased planning and consenting workload resulting from new development across the Middle Level.

3. IDB Recovery Fund T2B

Works to upgrade the weed screen cleaner have been completed.

4. New FCERM grant funding guidance

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

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

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

Project types that are eligible for grant funding include:

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

Asset Refurbishment Projects

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

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

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

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

New or Improved Asset Projects

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

These include:

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

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

Applying for funding

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

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

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

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

Timescales

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

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

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

The Board is strongly advised to consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and to instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly considering the following:

- **consider submitting new projects for inclusion in the FCERM Investment Programme (from July 2026)**
- **liaise with the Consulting Engineer to determine project suitability and timescales**
- **agree to making a contribution towards future project costs to aid funding prioritisation.**

5. Capital Works

Mepal Pumping Station Improvements had £80k allocated in 2025/26 for control panel replacement. The EA confirmed an allocation will be available in 2026/27.

We submitted a business case and approval is anticipated for the works to be delivered in 2026.

Author Name: Nicola Oldfield

Role: Chief Engineer

Appendix 1: Capital Improvement Programme

Appendix 2: Applications responded to since last report

Appendix 2: M&E Report

Appendix 1

[illegible]

Appendix 2

There have been 7 planning applications responded to since the last meeting.

There have been 1 Byelaw Consents (to discharge to a watercourse) processed since the last meeting.

There has been no Byelaw Consent (to undertake works in and around watercourses) processed since the last meeting.

There has been no infiltration device application processed since the last meeting.

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Meeting:	SUTTON & MEPAL IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Thursday 21st May 2026	Officer Responsible:	Dave Bantoft

1. M&E key messages and advice

Other than the matters previously reported or described below, only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant at each of the stations is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

The Board is strongly advised to consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement. The Board is asked to instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.

1.1 M&E Equipment Key Health Indicators

Over the past 2 years we have been compiling and verifying Pumping Station Key Data to allow easier identification of equipment age and the need for refurbishment to assist in developing an investment plan for asset refurbishment or replacement. The details below include any works already scheduled and funded to be completed this year. For example, the Weed screen upgrade works with CW Engineering.

To ensure reliability, resilience and longevity of the pumping equipment it needs to be refurbished or replaced at suitable intervals. We have experienced examples lately of pumps being left too long and failing, or when they are removed for overhaul, the condition is very poor and the pump overall lifetime has been reduced significantly, which is not cost-effective use of the asset. The same is true for control panels, component failures often damage other components incurring costly repairs and machine downtime. Overall, it is more cost effective to run well maintained equipment.

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



	Station				Weedscreen		
Station	Built	Pump Canisters	Pump Overhaul	Controls	WSC Bars	WSC O/H	Controls
Mepal	1929/ 1990	1990	Pump 1: new 2025, Pump 2: new 2023, Pump 3: new 2019	2026	1990	2026	2026

The Key Health Indicators have been updated to include works planned for 2026 which shows that the M&E equipment condition will be good.

1.2 Pumps

P1 - New unit fitted Oct 2025, **P2** - New unit fitted Oct 2023, **P3** New unit fitted Oct 2019

Pump 1 was replaced in October 2025, the pump that was removed had low insulation resistance and was noisy and although it was still runnable it cannot be deemed as a reliable spare.

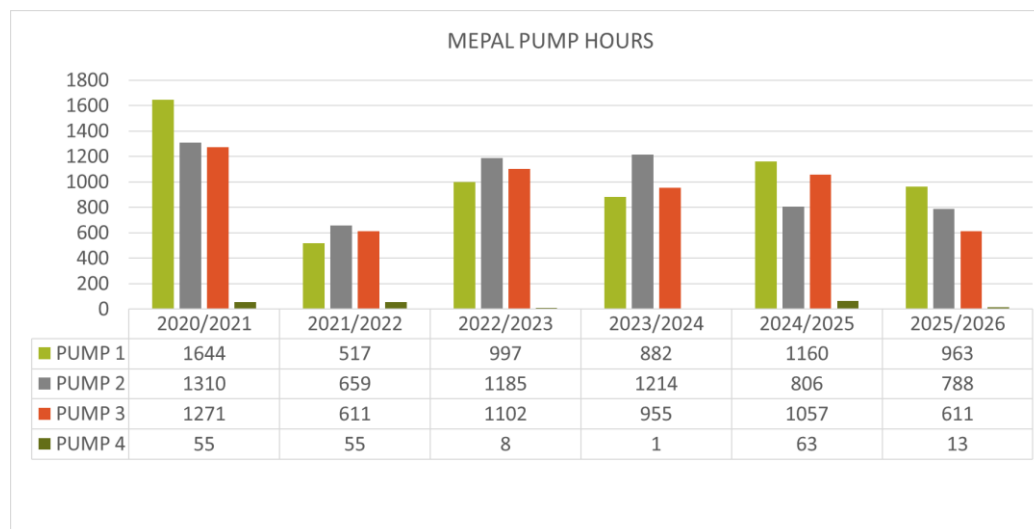
The pump control panel refurbishment will be ordered for fitment this summer.

The weedscreen failed towards the end of the season and was not viable to repair due to the upcoming weed screen replacement.

The last routine inspection at Mepal Pump Station took place on 3rd March 2026. Recommendations / remarks are as follows:

- 1) Pump 4 rails are showing signs of corrosion and should be planned in to replace with stainless tube.
- 2) Pump 1 & 3 cable protection has corroded and needs repair.
- 3) Pump Order 1,2,3.
- 4) Swapped duty to Pump 2 as Insulation Resistance Slightly Low.
- 5) The Power Factor Correction has failed on Pump 1 – This will be replaced as part of control panel refurbishment.
- 6) WSC Cleaner panel removed for upgrade.

2. Pumping summary



3. Inspections

- 3.1 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out during May 2025.
- 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. Water level Management

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

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

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